

## Aviation Safety Seminar

Opening Address  
JEFF RADEBE, MP  
Minister Of Transport

Johannesburg  
28 February 2006

President of AFRAA Mr. Folly-Kossi,

President of IATA – AFI region Mr. Chidambaram,

Members of the CAA Board,

Chief Executive Officers of airlines;

Representatives of civil aviation associations and the general aviation industry, the civil aviation safety community, aviation support organizations, and aviation safety officers;

Ladies and gentleman;

It gives me great pleasure to be with you this morning and to make some remarks about aviation safety. I have no doubt that we all agree that aviation safety is an immediate concern, not only to us the civil aviation community but to the public we serve, but too often aviation safety and security are treated either sensationally or in very simplistic terms.

We are indeed fortunate and honoured to welcome representatives of important international partners in pursuit of safer skies, including global, regional and domestic civil aviation industry bodies and institutions.

Aviation plays a critical role in modern economies, including the growing economies of Africa. Research carried out for the Air Transport Action Group provides some background why this is so. Air transport contributes about US\$ 330 billion a year to world GDP directly, but this rises to about US\$ 880 billion if we add indirect and induced impacts. This is about 2.4% of global GDP. It has become the primary means of moving people and high-value freight around the world, so that over 2 billion passengers and about 40% of interregional exports by value now travel by air. The sector directly employs some 5 million people, or about 29 million around the world, if we include all jobs linked to air transport. Some 40% of all international tourists also travel by air now as well.

Air transport's impact on Africa is also significant. It generates about 470 000 direct and indirect jobs across Africa, contributing over US\$ 11.3 billion to African GDP. If we add sectors such as tourism that owe their existence to the air transport sector, then the number of jobs increases to about 3.1 million and the contribution to African GDP reaches some US\$ 55.5 billion! African airlines directly employ over 82 000 people. There are about 46 500 working in African aerospace (that's maintenance companies, air traffic control etc), and over 21 000 by African airport operators, with a remaining 18 000 or so people employed in on-site airport jobs across the continent. Including all air transport related jobs, these figures rise substantially to over 216 000 for airline employment; over 151 000 for aerospace; over 56 000 for airports and just under 47 000 for on-site employment. The airlines contribute about US\$ 7.5 billion to African GDP, the airports just over US\$ 2 billion, and aerospace just over US\$ 1.5 billion. These are significant figures in anyone's book.

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Tourism is a driving force in a number of African countries, including Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania and is assuming an ever-increasing importance in South Africa and Namibia as well. This is one reason ASGI-SA has focused on tourism and strategies for increasing our capacity to bring more tourists to South Africa.

An amazing 20% of all tourism jobs in Africa are directly related to air-borne tourists, or, in other words, about 675 000 people in Africa are directly employed in tourist ventures because of air travel brings people here! I assume the figures do not include the increasing number of African tourists travelling within the continent. Comparatively, tourism-related employment supported by air is higher in Africa than Latin America and the Caribbean, North America and the Middle East. Only 300 000 people in the USA, or 4% of direct employment, for example, in tourism depend on arriving visitors from overseas. <sup>1</sup>

In Africa, air transport continues to be a primary means of communicating with remote areas, providing relief from natural disasters, transporting humanitarian aid, assisting and supporting peacekeeping efforts and, at the other end of the scale, bringing Africans closer together and improving consumer welfare.

There has been a phenomenal increase in the number of people who frequently use air transport as their normal mode of transport. Flying is increasingly becoming a viable form of transport for more and more people. Aviation is becoming more and more accessible to ordinary people, and we

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<sup>1</sup> Air Transport Action Group [The Economic and Social Benefits of Air Transport](#) [2005]. Sourced from IATA website, 27 February 2006.

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can rest assured that passenger numbers will continue to grow significantly in the near future.

The number of airlines registered in Africa increased from just over 300 to around 372 last year. Whereas only 16 African countries registered 5 or more airlines each in 2004, this number jumped to 23 in 2005, with the DRC, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa registering 41, 31, 30 and 29 each. Interestingly, West Africa and the Sahel region, including Sudan, have shown a marked increase in airline activity. Estimates for 2004 suggested that the airlines flew some 1400 aircraft in African colours, but this figure rose to 2050 last year.<sup>2</sup> IATA figures suggest that Africa will follow international trends and see a slight slowdown in both passenger and freight traffic during the next 5 years. Passenger growth is estimated at an aggregate growth of 5.7% for passengers and about 4.5% for freight.<sup>3</sup>

But these figures are for the Europe-Africa route and do not take into account the potentially enormous development of internal African airline activity, nor indeed do they fully appreciate increases in the movement of non-scheduled or general aviation traffic. So, aside from the increased number of aircraft flying through African skies, and the increased numbers of people this implies, we must also take note that the established airlines are extending their reach beyond their home regions on an increasing scale as well, joining east and west, north and south like never before. Increased civil traffic rides on the back of continued charter activity and particular business jet activity across the continent. Countries such as the DRC and Sudan, and areas of West Africa, can expect increased traffic associated with political developments as well.

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<sup>2</sup> 2005 figures in *World Airnews* August 2005, volume 33, no 6. 2004 quoted from previous edition.

<sup>3</sup> IATA, "Passenger and Freight Forecasts, 2005-2009", October 2005. IATA website

All in all, the traditional air corridors across the continent to Europe and further east and west are becoming busier and busier; whilst more areas are beginning to enjoy sufficient traffic movements to become classified as new air corridors. This must focus attention on the state of air navigation systems, airspace management and control, adequate and secure airport infrastructure and ground-based navigation aids, including proper and safe exclusion areas for people and animals around runways, taxiways, aprons as well as the existence of accurate navigation maps and data about the state of airports and landing strips. Whilst some airlines are making enormous efforts to upgrade their fleets and have bought new aircraft, for much of the time, new start-up airlines, and even some of the older operators are increasingly taking advantage of the buyers market for older generation aircraft. Whilst many of these aircraft still have many, many years of service ahead of them, it is quite clear that we should be concerned about far too many of them! One reason given for the growth in turbo-prop aircraft serving internal African routes is the poor state of infrastructure that restricts jet aircraft access.

It is simply undeniable that air transport has become a significant, indeed economically strategic mode of transport for the continent as a whole. I repeat a call I made last year that we need urgently to develop a sustainable and coherent African air transport programme to underpin the continent's continued development. And a critical element of such a plan must be safety and security in the air transport sector generally. We simply cannot allow safety issues to undermine confidence in our air transport systems.

It is against this background that aviation safety has become a serious concern, a concern that is justifiable given the growth and complexity of this

industry. While aviation appears to be safe, we must bear in mind that flying is inherently unsafe, and we must therefore make it safe. Deliberate measures and concerted efforts must be made to ensure that civil aviation is always a safe experience. This is especially true as we recognise that air transport will be the major carrier of 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup players and visitors. African carriers must be a central part of the effort to bring spectators and players to South Africa.

Despite some progress, it remains an unfortunate fact that the picture for Africa still does not look good. Urgent measures need to be taken if we want to win the confidence of the rest of the world. We all know the raw data: although Africa accounts for about 3 percent of the world's aircraft departures, in 2004 Africa accounted for about 27% of all fatal accidents in the world. 2005 was a particularly nasty year for commercial air safety, and although the global average of hull losses per million sectors was 0.78 in 2004, the African hull loss average was 5.2.

Last year at Sun City, African ministers' responsible for air transport recommitted the continent to reducing the accident rate by 50% by 2015, but all agree that "this requires steadfast decisions in the areas of upper airspace management, maintenance and operations on the ground; the phasing out of certain types of ageing aircraft, probably mostly in the cargo and air-freighter categories; [and] improving air-traffic navigation infrastructure and services".<sup>4</sup>

The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and our own organisations, AFRA and

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<sup>4</sup> Pres Thabo Mbeki, Opening Address to African Ministers' Air Transport Summit, Sun City, 2005

AFCAC, have collectively called for African member states to implement a number of international initiatives around safety in the air and security in the aviation sector generally. In doing so, these bodies have been hard at work to provide assistance and encouragement. All of us are indeed grateful for the hard work that they have put in to these efforts. However, those of us on the continent with the resources and experience to drive the process forward should also contribute generously. The strength of South Africa's air transport sector is well known and highly regarded, and it is this reputation that has thrust us into an active leadership role on the continent and beyond. But we must not take for granted the responsibility that such a role brings with it.

One of the challenges of safety initiatives on the Continent is the lack of detailed data to support the accurate determination of problem areas and necessary solutions. In the absence of adequate information, decisions on solutions and effective allocation of resources will continue to be difficult. Databases must be maintained in order to monitor trends and identify problematic areas in the aviation industry.

Last year, the South African Government approved the National Aviation Safety Plan and since then much has been done to implement key provisions. All our major ACSA airports and 10 others have completed compliant airport safety plans. Likewise, airlines have also produced compliant airline safety plans. Naturally, this is a process that is not governed by a "checklist mentality", but is dynamic and flexible to changing security and other profiles. I must register my appreciation to ACSA and the managements of other airports, and the airlines themselves, for the manner in which they have thrown themselves into these tasks. Now we must make sure that they are implemented with due haste.

Naturally, and given the environment, safety and security in the aviation sector gives rise to sensational reporting from time to time. I would simply urge that even when breaches of security take place, this doesn't necessarily mean that a specific threat was either imminent or successful. Also, if something happens, it needs to be judged against the intent of the intruder, an assessment of how the various layers of the security and safety system held up to the intrusion, or mitigated against it, and so on. From time to time, the ad hoc inspections of the CAA and their teams have revealed certain weaknesses that have been addressed immediately and thoroughly. At the same time, all inspections have proven the effectiveness of our systems. But again, I must stress that none of us, certainly not in government and I am assured by all that none in the industry either, are complacent about security issues.

During the coming year the civil aviation community in South Africa will continue its compliance with current aviation safety policies within the framework of ICAO standards and recommended practices. These will be measured against the results of the ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit in 2007.

Some thought is also being given to the creation of an autonomous accidents investigation authority together with alternative ways of funding its activities. The South African aviation accident and incident statistics for the period of the past ten years reflect an average of 150 accidents per annum, an average of 31 fatalities per year, and an estimated 1 500 incidents per annum. It is important to note that 80% of accidents are caused by human factors, and only 20% through mechanical problems. In the South African context, we should agree on a target for incident and

accident reductions based on intervention strategies to achieve that target, and we should review these regularly.

We need a partnership for safer skies, because the Department Of Transport and its civil aviation agencies alone cannot achieve safer skies for the country. All relevant stakeholders: industry professionals, operators, associations and support organizations, have distinct roles to play in the enhancement of safety. Recently a forthright commentator remarked that “most politicians [in Africa] tend to concentrate on the airlines and totally ignore the very real value of general aviation in the overall infrastructure.” We must all work much harder to appreciate and include general aviation in all our aviation matters and not burden it with over zealous regulation or ill-conceived policies covered under the rubric of security or safety needs. The nature of the general aviation sector, its multiple roles and functions, alongside and distinct from the comparative giants of the airlines, must be carefully considered and taken into account. To this end I believe we have a great deal to learn in the security context from the joint Airport Watch programme in the USA between the government authorities on the one hand and the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association on the other.

Fortunately, both as a country and indeed as a continent, we are not alone in seeking safer skies. Among the many international programmes developed by IATA and ICAO, I just want to mention the recent development of the IATA Operation Safety Audit programme in which our airlines participate. The first African audits were conducted last year, and we all congratulate South African Airways for successfully completing its safety audit. It becomes the first southern African airline to do so.

Next year, ICAO will be conducting an audit of the SA Safety Oversight Institutions, a major part of which is the Civil Aviation Authority. It is our duty to ensure that we are compliant with our obligations. We cannot afford to fail this country. Preparations, that I believe have already started, should be refined and implemented effectively. I am confident that the CAA Board and its employees will rise to this challenge, and I am aware that the industry has availed itself to support the CAA in this regard, and I thank them for their contribution in advance.

The South African government attaches great importance to civil aviation, which is an important component in our economic development. Civil aviation has played a definitive role in our endeavours to eradicate poverty, improve the lives of our people and assist with the development of relationships with our sister African States. Your seminar follows a very successful International Aviation Security Screening Symposium held in February last year, and comes before the African Aviation Safety and Security conference scheduled for July 2006. All this work will not be ignored. This seminar today therefore has our fullest support. Thanks once again to all concerned for taking time to deliberate on aviation safety and security for Africa.

Thank you.