

Media Statement

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TO : All Media
ATTENTION : News Editors / Transport Reporters / All Reporters

For immediate use

TRANSPORT DEPT. ISSUES A REMINDER FOR COMMENTS ON THE GAZETTED AIRFREIGHT STRATEGY FOR SOUTH AFRICA

PRETORIA: The National Department of Transport (DOT) has issued a reminder to all stakeholders regarding the fast approaching closing date for comments regarding the gazetted Airfreight Strategy of South Africa.

In recent weeks, Cabinet granted the DOT approval to gazette the draft Airfreight Strategy for South Africa in the Government Gazette for public comment. The window period for the public to submit their feedback on the said document is thirty (30) working days: 26 September – 07 November 2025.

This draft Strategy for South Africa is a product of a rigorous, future-focused assessment that the DOT initiated on its national transport policies particularly the National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) of 2017. Some of the findings identified during this assessment exercise is a critical challenge that: while passenger and commercial aviation have advanced, the airfreight sub-sector has remained relatively underdeveloped and fragmented. This situation limits the country's trade and logistical capabilities, thus emphasizing the need for a more integrated and efficient airfreight network to unlock its full potential.

To turn around this current situation, the draft Airfreight Strategy for South Africa aims to unlock the full economic potential of the airfreight sub-sector by addressing systemic challenges such as fragmented cargo corridors, market barriers, and weak regional connectivity. Its originality is on the eleven (11) identified priority areas of focus and one of these is the usage of drones or UAVs in the provision of seamless services and movement of goods in the airfreight sub-sector.

Amongst key elements of the strategy is the role of drones or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) which is explicitly articulated in the draft Airfreight Strategy for South Africa

Drones or AUVs are included not as a simple technical innovation in the envisaged Airfreight Strategy for South Africa but as a critical enabler designed to significantly multiply the efficiency, inclusivity, and resilience of the entire national airfreight system, including:

1. *Boosting Efficiency and Competitiveness* – Drones or UAVs offer a powerful solution for the 'first and last mile' of delivery. They will complement the conventional road based transportation by

rapidly moving smaller, time-sensitive, and high-value shipments. For businesses, this means lower operational costs, faster delivery times, and a significant boost to e-commerce growth.

2. *Driving Inclusivity and Reach* – This technology will extend the reach of airfreight to rural and hard-to-reach areas where traditional modes of transport are hugely challenged. This opens pathways for new entrants and small businesses, creating an inclusive logistics network that supports the equitable distribution of goods and services across all communities.
3. *Enhancing Resilience and Sustainability* – By offering an agile, alternative transport option, drones or UAVs add a crucial layer of resilience to supply chains, ensuring continuity during disasters like floods or infrastructure failures. Furthermore, drones or UAVs stand to foster alignment with global sustainability goals by providing a greener, low-emission delivery method.

Given the public conversation on drones or UAVs that has sparked in the wake of publication of the draft Airfreight Strategy for South Africa, it is essential for the DOT:

1. to implore the public, once more, to submit their comments into the gazetted draft Airfreight Strategy for South Africa and;
2. to reaffirm its policy position on the registration of drones or UAVs as articulated in the NCAP of 2017, which by extension will also be applicable to the envisaged Airfreight Strategy for South Africa that: *South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) continue to oversee the regulation of civilian drones or UAVs of which the regulation should be within a clear and well-structured framework to ensure that operations align with international norms and standards related to aviation safety, security and environmental protection.*

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