



MINISTRY
PUBLIC ENTERPRISES
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

PRETORIA, 25 May 2023 -- The Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) is seriously concerned about the conduct and the recent utterances of its suspended Director-General (DG), Mr Kgathatso Tlhakudi, who has embarked on an ill-conceived campaign to misinform and deceive the public, whereas his role in the Department warrants that he exercises duty of care as a senior public servant.

Mr Tlhakudi, is aware of internal processes that are looking into the misconduct that resulted in his suspension in June 2022 as has been previously announced. Rather than allow for due process, Mr Tlhakudi, has instead opted to impugn the reputation of the Department, its staff and by extension its executive political authority, Mr Pravin Gordhan, the Minister of Public Enterprises.

Minister Gordhan refutes the baseless claims and allegations by Mr Tlhakudi that he interfered and handpicked the Takatso Consortium as the preferred bidder to purchase the 51 percent shareholding in South African Airways (SAA).

“These claims are patently false and are emblematic of someone who is refusing to be held accountable, and is instead clutching at straws, and looking for public sympathy through deception and lies,” Minister Gordhan said.

“The Department will not be deterred from working to stabilize our SOEs, exposing corruption and creating a stable framework through which our SOEs can deliver on their developmental mandate,” Minister Gordhan added.

The Department views Mr. Tlhakudi’s conduct and utterances as unbecoming of someone who is entrusted with safeguarding the public interest and has an obligation to adhere to the Department’s established norms and standards of conduct.

After his suspension, a disciplinary process overseen by the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development was instituted. The process is yet to conclude. The Department appeals to the media to apply established journalistic ethics in dealing with this matter as it serves no public good to allow someone to peddle lies without objective and verifiable evidence.

Directors-General are formally appointed by the President of the Republic, which appointments are considered and recommended by Cabinet. Apart from personal competence and technical capability, DGs are also required to display the highest levels of ethical and professional conduct since, as accounting officers of national departments, they oversee how billions of rands of public money is deployed.

In the context of the DPE, the DG also oversees and makes recommendations on crucial policy directives of government regarding how state-owned enterprises, which are public assets of our country, must be managed.

Since his suspension, Mr Tlhakudi has gone on the offensive with a spurious media campaign to portray himself as a 'victim' who opposed the SAA-Takatso transaction, in which government intends to dispose of its 51% share in the national carrier. This is patently false.

During his tenure, Mr Tlhakudi was a key driver and proponent of the SAA-Takatso transaction. As DG he was the point of contact with the consortium and he authorised the due diligence process that was conducted to evaluate the Takatso bid. Equally false are his assertions of undue ministerial interference when bids were evaluated for SAA, and that he was suspended as DG because he opposed alleged irregularities in the transaction.

The Department has noted that in the latest round of television interviews this week, Mr Tlhakudi has continued to rehash old allegations but still fails to provide any convincing factual evidence. The veracity of his allegations remains untested and unproven. Mr Tlhakudi's present conduct has all the hallmarks of a disgruntled employee, who refuses to account for his alleged abuse of office. Until now, out of respect for the rule of law and due legal process, the DPE has refrained from responding publicly to Mr Tlhakudi, but his conduct has become untenable.

The DPE will not allow that the public's trust be jeopardized by a well-orchestrated campaign to subvert the truth and undermine its work.

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