



MINISTRY  
PUBLIC ENTERPRISES  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **DPE SLAMS PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON CANCELLED SAA DEAL AS A CONCOCTION OF LIES TO CONFUSE THE PUBLIC**

**PRETORIA, 27 March 2024** -- The Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) deems a report by Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Public Enterprises on the cancelled South African Airways (SAA) equity partnership transaction as a "concoction of lies and deceit" meant to confuse the public, and it said it reserves all its legal rights over the Committee's unsubstantiated conclusions.

The conclusions of the portfolio committee in the report are inconsistent with the mandate that was given to the Committee by the Speaker of the National Assembly, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula -- to ascertain whether there was any merit to the allegations levelled at the DPE over the deal by its former director-general, Mr Kgathatso Tlhakudi.

Instead, the Committee's report suggests that its chair, Mr Khaya Magaxa, has gone beyond his mandate, and has overlooked critical submissions by DPE and by Minister Pravin Gordhan, and opened the door to Mr Tlhakudi to keep altering his false narratives to hoodwink the public.

The adversarial way that the Committee has conducted itself during this exercise also indicates that the Committee has never been interested in the facts but in castigating the DPE and 'kicking the can down the road' for political expediency and spectacle.

Even though the Committee is aware that Mr Tlhakudi was not telling the truth, its report is condoning his hypocrisy, exposing the Committee to potentially aiding and abetting the obstruction of due process. The Committee's conclusions even defy a declaration by Parliament's own legal adviser, Mr Andile Tetyana, who told the Committee he found no sign of corruption in the proposed deal.

The DPE will protect its integrity using all legal avenues available to it.

Based on its early assessment, the DPE has found the report to be riddled with conjecture, fabrications, distortions and lies aimed at impugning the reputation of the DPE, its staff, and that of its executive political head, Minister Pravin Gordhan.

Furthermore, the report provides ample evidence of how the Committee has strung along the DPE, its officials, and Minister Gordhan for well over a year in a process that now appears to have been a fait accompli from the start.

Also of greater concern, are several instances from the report that indicate that the Committee has deliberately overlooked critical, transaction-related information provided to it by the Department, which information proves irrefutably that Mr Tlhakudi was the architect of the proposed transaction and had led it from inception.

The report also shows that the Committee had bent over backwards to entertain new lies by the former DG, in which he is now, and without presenting a shred of evidence, disputing the authenticity of his signature on a series of documents he generated in the course of advancing the transaction, including correspondence to prospective strategic equity partners for SAA.

“The public should not be bamboozled to think the Committee chair has acted without bias and with due care. Even from its recommendations it is clear that the report is a concoction of lies and deceit through which it seeks to confuse the public and absolve the former DG.

“In pursuing this end, the report subverts Parliament’s authority to satisfy itself through submissions made before the committee, including those made by DPE that the transaction was above board, and was about preserving the country’s national strategic interest in SAA,” the DPE said.

“What emerges from the report is an affront to our Constitutional order, whereby Mr Magaxa has misappropriated for himself the power to discount and disregard critical submissions by the DPE in order to create a contrived notion about the DPE’s supposed culpability, while absolving an individual who has shown a penchant for dishonesty, malice and fabrications,” the DPE added.

“Mr Tlhakudi is not a whistleblower. He is a disgruntled former employee who has been surreptitiously put on a pedestal by the Committee to absolve himself through lies meant to undermine efforts aimed at enabling a recalibrated SAA to proceed with its recovery plan unencumbered by uncertainty.”

The DPE is not averse to any further scrutiny of the transaction so long it is done judiciously, and without prejudice. “We will not allow a legitimate process of accountability to be hijacked for political shenanigans ahead of an election,” the DPE said.

“We also are aware of the importance of ensuring that the principle of separation of powers is adhered to in view of the government’s intention to leverage commercial transactions in its efforts to drive growth and investment in key spheres of our economy.”

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