

# Safety remains a priority for SAA

South African Airways (SAA) acting chief executive officer, Zuks Ramasia has affirmed that the safety and security of customers, aircraft and employees are of paramount importance to the airline.



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This follows claims by the South African Cabin Crew Association (SACCA) and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) that the airline brought in inexperienced staff to run operations during the strike. The unions embarked on industrial action last week.

"SAA calls on the South African Cabin Crew Association (SACCA) and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) to retract the untruthful and unfounded allegations that flying the national carrier is in any way unsafe.

"SAA has a proven safety record and we have an unwavering commitment to safety. The safety and security of passengers and crew is the highest single priority to SAA. We do not compromise on that," said Ramasia.

She said SAA was the first airline in the world to train its pilots on 'Upset Recovery Training', and its instructors train airlines around the world on this.

"We remain committed to ensuring the highest levels of safety and security on all our flights. It is important to state that SAA is mindful of its obligations to comply with all regulations and continue to ensure safe and secure operations.

"SAA will, therefore, maintain the required levels of personnel, including oversight post holders and necessary compliance training during this strike period," she said.

## **Labour discussions**

On Saturday, the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) met with SAA and the unions, in terms of the Section 150 process, following SAA's request to the CCMA to conciliate the salary increment impasse between SAA and SACCA/NUMSA and NTM (National Transport Movement).

"The CCMA commissioners ended a long day's proceedings, tasking the company to consider options on the way forward and the company will then revert to the commissioners in due course. The Commissioners will then reconvene the discussions between the parties," Ramasia said.

She said since NUMSA and SACCA gave SAA 48 hours notice to strike on Tuesday their demands have been amended three times.

"The company has written two letters to these two unions requesting clarity on what exactly they are demanding on behalf of their members, to ensure that there is no confusion and/or uncertainty," Ramasia said.

NUMSA and SACCA have demanded an 8% salary increase.

"This is the only lawful demand made by NUMSA and SACCA under the current strike notices. The company has advised that the airline cannot afford to pay any salary increases.

"However, it has offered the unions a 5.9% salary increase effective in the March 2020 pay month. In addition, the company will pay the first six months back-pay, from 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019, in March 2020; and the remaining six months back-pay in April 2020, provided that SAA has received funds to do so," said Ramasia.

She said SAA has repeatedly communicated the precarious financial position of the company, the negative and dire ramifications that the company – and, by implication, each and every employee – would be exposed to by employees engaging in industrial action