

Monthly Newsletter

South African Aerospace, Maritime and Defence Industries Association

Postponement of AMD and SAAMDEC AGMs



The combined AMD/SAAMDEC Annual General Meetings (AGMs), initially scheduled for the 13th of June 2024, were postponed due to the imminent and unprecedented coalition government formation following the 2024 National and Provincial Elections. This political uncertainty presents challenges for the industry, which prompted the decision to delay the AGMs until the political situation has stabilised and key industry appointments, such as the Minister of Defence and the National Conventional Arms Control Committee have been confirmed. The rescheduled AGMs will still occur within the constitutionally required timeframe.

The postponement of the AGMs, although a necessary measure given the current political climate, should not overshadow the significance of the upcoming AMD Elective AGM. The election of a new Board, the reconstruction of committees and the appointment of a Chairperson of Stature, remain a collective contribution to the evolution of AMD as a leading force in the defence sector. As AMD looks towards the future, this AGM marks a significant step in fortifying its commitment to innovation, collaboration and strategic leadership. We encourage all members to remain engaged and look forward to reconvening the AGMs at a time that ensures the most effective outcomes for our organisation and industry. We appreciate your understanding and continued support.

South Africa's Defence Artificial Intelligence Hub

By Dr Moses B. Khanyle, CD(SA)
Director: Defence Artificial Intelligence Research Unit (DAIRU)

The potential role of artificial intelligence (AI) in solving most of humanity's challenges has been realised and every effort is being made to extract maximum value. AI is one of the most topical issues that all nations, including South Africa, are seized with, especially with a view to improving productivity and cyber-resilience. It is no wonder that South Africa is sparing no effort in identifying and exploiting the potential benefits of AI for both the public and private sectors. The Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT) is spearheading the government's roll-out of AI initiatives at sector level. The DCDT does this by, among other things, launching AI hubs that focus on specific sectors.

On 3 May 2024, the DCDT and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) launched the defence AI hub, the first of its kind on the African continent, known as the Defence Artificial Intelligence Research Unit (DAIRU) within the Faculty of Military Science of Stellenbosch University at the Military Academy. DAIRU is designed to conduct academic and applied research on AI-related matters that have relevance to the Department of Defence (DOD) in general and the military, in particular. It will also be responsible for providing academic programmes at post-graduate level and short courses on AI.

The process for enrolling students for 2025 academic year will start in the second half of this year. One of the exciting features of DAIRU's value proposition is the ability to collaborate with various national and international AI practitioners and researchers in the defence ecosystem. DAIRU will also be instrumental in providing advisory and decision support to the DOD and government on AI as it pertains to defence and the military. In order to facilitate the publication and sharing of research findings, the faculty will rely on its peer-reviewed academic journal called the Defence Innovation and Management in Africa (DIMA) journal.

The establishment of DAIRU comes at the most opportune time as the world is grappling with the critical issue of how to regulate AI technologies, in terms of development, access to certain capabilities and the ethical dilemma associated with such technologies. While some of the developed countries, especially in the European Union (through the EU Artificial Intelligence Act of 2024), have already started with defining certain parameters for AI regulation, this has not yet fully taken root in the African continent. It is envisaged that DAIRU, in collaboration with other key stakeholders, will contribute towards initiating and consolidating the regulatory framework on defence-related AI in the country and the continent.

A Look at the National Security and Safety Townhall

The inaugural National Security and Safety Townhall, hosted by the South African Aerospace, Maritime and Defence Industries Association (AMD), took place on the 15th of May 2024, at Workshop 17 in Sandton. The event gathered over 80 delegates from the aerospace, maritime, and defence sectors, along with government officials, policymakers and security experts, underscoring a keen interest in national security issues. A diverse panel representing various political parties, including VF Plus, Democratic Alliance (DA), African National Congress (ANC), Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and ActionSA, contributed to a rich discussion with their distinct perspectives on defence policies. The extensive media coverage by outlets such as SABC News and Defence Web broadened the event's reach and impact.

The townhall commenced with opening remarks by AMD Executive Director Mr Sandile Ndllovu, who highlighted AMD's commitment to enhancing South Africa's defence capabilities. Advocate Vasu Gounden, founder of ACCORD, delivered the keynote address, providing a thorough analysis of the nation's current safety and security landscape, identifying both challenges and opportunities. The discussions that followed covered various crucial topics, such as the state of national security, the need for robust policy advocacy, and the significant role of the aerospace, maritime, and defence industries in economic development. The interactive Q&A session allowed delegates to engage directly with panellists, fostering a dynamic and informative dialogue on national security and defence matters.

Key outcomes from the townhall discussions include proposals to increase the defence budget, with an emphasis on bolstering resources and infrastructure to address security challenges. The "Buy Local 70%" initiative was highlighted to support local industries and enhance self-reliance in defence procurement. A national dialogue on safety and security was advocated to ensure comprehensive and inclusive policy development. Improved border management through training, updated policies, and streamlined systems and procedures was emphasised as essential for national security. Additionally, there was a call to infuse young talent into the security sector, ensuring a dynamic and modern approach to national safety. Ms Michelle Nxumalo, AMD Acting Chairperson, concluded the event by summarising the key points and stressing the importance of continued collaboration to address South Africa's security challenges.

The National Security and Safety Townhall succeeded in elevating the discourse surrounding South Africa's defence and security capabilities. It paved the way for future engagements aimed at ensuring a secure and prosperous South Africa, with the defence industry playing a pivotal role. The event highlighted the importance of continued collaboration and dialogue to address national security challenges and foster industry growth. AMD remains committed to fostering industry and collaboration to contribute to the nation's security and economic prosperity.



The Oceans Economy Conference & Expo 2024: Driving Maritime Innovation and Sustainability



The Oceans Economy Conference & Expo 2024, held on **May 22nd and 23rd** at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (ICC), emerged as the premier gathering for Southern Africa's maritime industry. This significant event brought together leaders from commercial and defence sectors, focusing on diverse topics such as transport, logistics, offshore industries, tourism, and maritime security. The overarching goal was to propel innovation, ensure sustainable development of maritime resources and drive advancements in the sector through the exhibition of cutting-edge technologies and robust industry discussions.

The anticipation for the event was high, with stakeholders eager to discuss new maritime technologies and strategies for safeguarding South Africa's maritime assets. The conference highlighted themes ranging from fishing and environmental affairs to naval strategies and sea rescue. The event attracted over 350 delegates, including prominent officials, industry experts and stakeholders, contributing to a comprehensive and inclusive dialogue on the future of the maritime industry.

Exhibitors

The expo featured a diverse range of exhibitors showcasing cutting-edge technologies and innovative solutions, including:

1. ARMSCOR
2. AMD
3. Damen Shipyards Cape Town

4. FFS Refiners
5. Taroworx Group
6. SA Navy
7. SA Maritime Business Chamber
8. FishSA
9. Oceana Group
10. South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI)
11. Mzansi Scuba Diving Academy (MSDA)

The event received substantial media coverage from outlets such as Maritime Review Africa, Cape Times and News24. All speeches and presentations were recorded for future editing and dissemination, ensuring that the insights and discussions reached a broader audience. The conference also culminated in an exclusive cocktail function, providing a relaxed atmosphere for delegates to network and build meaningful industry connections.

The 2024 Oceans Economy Conference and Expo was a resounding success, bringing together key players from the commercial and defence maritime industries to explore new technologies, strategies and solutions. The event highlighted the importance of collaboration, innovation, and sustainable development in the maritime sector. With its comprehensive agenda and networking opportunities, the conference set a high standard for future industry gatherings, positioning itself as a catalyst for maritime innovation and security in Southern Africa.



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AAD 2024 100 Days Countdown Event: A Step Towards Innovation and Excellence

The AAD 2024 100 Days Countdown Event, held at the prestigious Royal Elephant Hotel, was a remarkable occasion, setting the stage for what promises to be a groundbreaking exhibition in defence and aerospace. The event brought together esteemed guests and industry leaders, all unified in their vision for a secure and innovative future.

Advocate Solomzi Mbada, Chief Executive of Armscor, delivered the welcoming remarks, acknowledging Chief of the South African National Defence force, General Rudzani Maphanyanya in absence and setting a hospitable and enthusiastic tone for the occasion. He commended the AAD office for organising such a beautiful and successful event, emphasising the meticulous planning and effort that contributed to the countdown celebration. Advocate Mbhanda highlighted the dedication and hard work of the AAD team, which culminated in a magnificent event that exemplifies the power of collective effort toward a common goal.

The event was masterfully led by Mr Siphwe Dlamini, Head of Communication (HoC) for the South African Department of Defence, who served as the Programme Director. His witty sense of humour and engaging demeanour captivated the audience, maintaining their interest and enthusiasm throughout the proceedings. The audience's positive response was a testament to Mr Dlamini's ability to blend professionalism with a light-hearted touch.

The Mayor of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, Mr Cilliers Brink, graced the event with his presence, bringing much-needed enthusiasm to the countdown. He acknowledged the dignitaries and delegates in attendance and expressed his full support for the upcoming AAD 2024. Mr Brink highlighted the importance of such events in fostering a great city, underscoring the significance of the AAD 2024 for the City of Tshwane and its residents.

The Honourable Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Ms Thandi Modise, delivered a powerful keynote address. She commended the unwavering dedication of the defence sector and emphasized the need for continued focus on technological advancement. Ms Modise highlighted the importance of supporting aspiring innovators, particularly the youth, to ensure a future rich in innovation. She stressed that building a secure

tomorrow requires efforts starting today, with a strong emphasis on technological progress and nurturing young talent. Ms Nakedi Phasha, AAD Exhibition Director, stood before the masses and delivered an encouraging progress report on the status of AAD. She announced that more than 70% of the exhibition space is already booked for the upcoming AAD 2024, indicating the high level of interest and confidence in the event. This milestone attests to the flagship status that AAD 2024 is poised to achieve. Ms. Phasha, who has steadily grasped the helm and steered the AAD ship favourably, also commended her staff for their dedication and hard work. She highlighted that the success of the AAD 100 Days Countdown is merely a snippet of what is to follow in September 2024.

The Chairperson of the AAD Youth Development Programme (YDP) Sub-committee, Mr Kholisile Khumalo, emphasised the crucial role of youth in shaping the future, resonating with the sentiments of the Honourable Minister of Defence, Ms Thandi Modise. He announced an ambitious plan to recruit 12,000 learners across the country, who will have the opportunity to experience and engage with showcased innovations at AAD 2024. Mr Khumalo underscored the importance of encouraging youth to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), with a particular focus on science and mathematics as major priorities. He stressed that nurturing a thirst for careers in the aerospace and defence sectors is essential for ensuring a consistently innovation-focused future.

The event concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks from Mr Sandile Ndllovu, Executive Director of AMD. He expressed his deep gratitude to all who contributed to the success of the countdown event and reiterated the commitment to laying the groundwork for a pioneering future in defence and aerospace. Mr Ndllovu's remarks encapsulated the spirit of the event, celebrating innovation, excellence, and the unwavering commitment of an incredible team.

The AAD 2024 100 Days Countdown Event was not just a celebration but a clarion call to action, inspiring all stakeholders to work towards a future defined by innovation and excellence in defence and aerospace. The Royal Elephant Hotel provided the perfect backdrop for this significant milestone, setting the tone for the promising journey ahead.

FEATURE

AMD Whistle-Blowing Channel

We wish to inform you about the introduction of a new "Whistle-Blowing Channel". Reports and concerns related to any whistle-blowing matters can be directed to the Chairperson of the AMD Risk and Audit Committee, **Mr Marcus Capuzzimati** at **marcus.capuzzimati@fuchs.co.za**. Though we have not yet received any reports through this channel, it is crucial to emphasise the significance of this mechanism in fostering transparency and accountability within our association. The establishment of the Whistle-Blowing Channel underscores our commitment to providing a secure avenue for individuals to raise concerns and contribute to maintaining the highest ethical standards in our operations.

