

Tuesday, 28 October 2025

The South African Weather Service addresses unfounded allegations of corruption and governance failure

The South African Weather Service (SAWS) has noted with disappointment a series of news reports carrying claims that falsely suggest that the entity's Executive Management is engaged in improper conduct and that its Board is failing to conduct proper oversight. Moreover, these claims raise questions about the entity's ability to perform its functions.

At least one of the news reports has attributed the misleading claims to a labour union that operates within the organisation. Incidentally, these claims and concerns come at a time of a wage dispute between the entity and the labour union in question, as well as a Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration decision, declining to issue the union concerned with a certificate to picket.

The SAWS wishes to provide clarity on the alleged impropriety, including claims of "governance failures, procurement manipulation, financial mismanagement, unchecked executive power and a culture of impunity", all of which are vague allegations that are not substantiated and that are furthermore not borne out by the performance of the entity.

The bulk of the claims are procurement-related and center on the delayed process to acquire a new High-Performance Computing system (HPC), a system that is at the core of the SAWS' weather forecasting work and is used to, among other things, run numeric weather prediction models.

The current HPC system has reached its end of life and is thus due for replacement. The delay in concluding the acquisition of the new system, a process that predates the current Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) tenure and that of the current Board, is the direct result of efforts on the part of the entity's Executive Management to ensure a procurement process that is consistent with the country's public procurement laws.

To date, the process has been restarted on three separate occasions in efforts to rid it of any glaring shortcomings and to ensure compliance. The initial attempt at procuring the HPC system was queried for compliance with procurement regulations by the current CEO, which query, after advice was solicited from the National Treasury, vindicated the CEO's concerns, leading to the recommended cancellation of

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Board Members: Ms Sandika Daya (Chairperson), Prof. Sylvester Mpandeli (Deputy Chairperson), Dr Lesley Luthuli, Ms Mpho Mogodi, Dr Phumudzo Tharaga, Prof. Thando Ndarana, Ms Balebetje Zondi, Adv. Ikaneng Mokgosi, Ms Ané Bruwer, Dr Pritish Dala, Mr Maesela Kekana, Mr Ishaam Abader (CEO).

Acting Company Secretary: Ms Karabo Moreroa

the tender. The next attempt at this procurement was halted by non-responsive bids, leading to the expiry of the second tender due to the effluxion of time. The third cancellation resulted from a resolution by the previous Board, dispelling assertions that there is no Board oversight over crucial procurement decisions.

The latest and most current process is now at an advanced stage of bid evaluation. The evaluation will be succeeded by a bid adjudication and a recommendation of the successful bidder to the CEO to consider for approval. In addition to the existing checks and balances, which include independent bid specification, evaluation and adjudication committees, the current Board has resolved that the process be subjected to a double-blind review. This entails two independent probity reviews of the procurement process before any award is made in order to prevent irregular expenditure.

The current Board amended the delegation of authority to ensure that, from a governance perspective, it is not involved in operational matters such as procurement. However, it ensures that probity audits are conducted when required, as well as that the Board receives quarterly Supply Chain Management reports, including on all procurement exceeding R10 million, through the Audit and Risk Committee. These safeguards remain in place, and documentation in this regard is available.

While these probity reviews are not mandated in legislation, they are a further attempt by the Executive Management and the Board to ensure that there is no non-compliant procurement and ultimately prevent irregular expenditure. As such, the allegation that the Board did away with key safeguards, granting the CEO unfettered procurement powers, is also without merit.

The entity's Executive Management has assured the Board that, in the unlikely event of the current HPC system failing pending the finalisation of the procurement process, the entity has contingency plans in place to ensure that its most critical services can continue. The entity's Business Continuity Plan, which was implemented during the recent cyberattack, ensured uninterrupted service of our most critical services to the public.

A forensic investigation report and various legal opinions that dealt with allegations around interference with the HPC system procurement processes were reported and were addressed by the previous Board together with previous and current Executive Authority as part of the close-out report received from the previous Board and the new Board's onboarding processes. All documentation relating to this matter was requested and shared with the Auditor-General South Africa (AGSA) as part of the 2024/25 audit process, and no findings were identified relating to the investigation or consequence management processes.

The current Board is not aware of any whistleblowing matters or outstanding consequence management relating to the HPC procurement processes reported during its term and is in no way or form protecting the CEO or any SAWS employees. However, in line with the Board's "zero tolerance" approach to fraud and corruption, if there are any whistleblowing matters reported they are investigated, with the progress, including consequence management, monitored until conclusion of the matter.

In addition, if any of the matters involve the CEO, the Board will report it immediately to the Minister for investigation. This will be in accordance with section 8.3 of the SAWS Act, which states that: "If the Board, for any reason, needs to have any allegation or allegations levelled at the CEO investigated, or if the

Minister requires an investigation of any matter relating to the CEO, the Board must request the Minister to institute a preliminary investigation". Lastly, there have been various instances of consequence management where corruption and/or collusion was definitively dealt with, and guilty employees have been disciplined and/or dismissed during the new Board's tenure.

On claims that a RADAR-parts tender was awarded to a supplier without a competitive bidding process (single source), such infrastructure was originally and historically bought from an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) 10 to 15 years ago. Accordingly, spares must be bought from that OEM or an accredited supplier of that OEM's spare parts. RADARS are specialised and expensive pieces of equipment, and the SAWS cannot use spares not approved for their functioning. In accordance with the legislative prescripts the single source deviation was also reported to the National Treasury and AGSA. All irregular, fruitless and wasteful expenditure is to be dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Irregular Expenditure framework and reported to the Board via the Audit and Risk Committee.

Regarding the delay in awarding the fleet contract, the Service Level Agreement with the service provider of the fleet contract expired on 30 September 2024. A deviation was approved to extend the SLA to 31 December 2024. Subsequently, the procurement processes were followed to the letter until the tender was finally awarded. While waiting for the tender process to be finalised, interim measures, in terms of which employees could hire vehicles or use their own and claim back their expenses, were put in place.

The reported cash deficit that is referenced in the article resulted mostly from the completion of procurement processes late in the 2024/25 financial year. Accordingly, the goods or services that were being procured had yet to be delivered at the end of that financial year. The deficit is determined in terms of a National Treasury formula, which considers an entity's cash balance, money owed to the entity, the entity's liabilities, ringfenced funds and commitments to pay for procured goods and services that were still to be delivered at financial year end.

It must be mentioned specifically that procurement processes depend on various factors, and that "obstruction" of procurement processes would need to be explained and justified to the Board and, more importantly, to National Treasury which control the allocation of budgets.

Regarding the former Infrastructure and Information Systems Executive Manager, it is false to state that he was "forced out" and that the CEO "appointed himself to act in the role." The former Executive Manager retired. The responsibilities attached to the role were shared among the executive team, including the CEO, as an interim measure, pending the filling of the vacancy. This information was communicated to staff in June 2025.

The appointment of an Information and Communication Technology security specialist, on the other hand, was delayed by, among other things, disciplinary action instituted against the position's line manager. A previous process to fill the vacancy was unsuccessful due to the inexperience of candidates. The process was prioritised and re-run after the cyberattack in January 2025. The security specialist will assume duty on 9 November 2025.

The SAWS has a zero-tolerance approach to fraud, corruption, and collusion. The entity would furthermore welcome any independent investigation instituted by the Executive Authority into any allegations of corruption and/or collusion. Lastly, it should be noted that for the last three financial years the SAWS has obtained unqualified audit opinions of which two were clean audits.

The entity will accordingly make no further public comments on these matters and would appreciate it if the sources of information are verified and that written responses to media queries are verified to provide factual information relating to the entity.

End

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