African Aerospace Conference of the Aeronautical Society of South Africa delivers engaging programme

The 2019 Annual Conference of the Aeronautical Society of South Africa (a division of the Royal Aeronautical Society) took place on 16-18 October 2019 at the CSIR International Convention Centre in Pretoria. Its theme was African Aerospace: Innovation & Passion. The event was attended by 130 local and international delegates, representing academia, government, industry, the media and science councils.

Marié Botha, President of the Aeronautical Society of South Africa, and Chair of the Organising Committee, explains the choice of theme, “To thrive in the aerospace industry today, one cannot be mediocre. Competing on the world stage requires innovative, world-leading components, technologies, aircraft and systems. Passion is what helps one to stay the course for development in aerospace.

“Contributions to the formal programme and the nature of the social events were well aligned to the conference theme.”


Day 1 and 2 of the conference programme had eight technical sessions, covering a range of topics: aerodynamics and control, satellite technology, aircraft performance and design, aerospace manufacturing, aerospace propulsion, rocket propulsion and other topics. Some 25 local and international delegates delivered quality presentations; several slots had standing room only.

Day 2 commenced with the Women in Aerospace Breakfast, with Guests of Honour Linda Weiland of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and Major Nandi Zama, SANDF, as well as an invited guest, Tshepang Ralehoko, an aspiring pilot.
A distinguished group of pilots were invited for a panel discussion to conclude the programme on Day 2. The topic under discussion is of great interest to the aviation fraternity: Automation – Unintended Consequences on Pilot Handling Skills and Aviation Safety. The discussion was facilitated by Maj. Gen. Desmond Barker SAAF Rtd, who commented, “If ever there was a need for design engineers and pilots to draw closer to one another, it is now. As pilots, we need to ensure that engineers understand the pilot’s world with all its nuances, particularly the role of the pilot in dealing with the increasingly innovative engineering we are faced with in aircraft design.”

The conference concluded on day 3 with a tour to The Airplane Factory in Johannesburg, an illustrative example of African Aerospace: Innovation and Passion.