**National of Assembly**

**Question No: 1957**

**1957. Mrs N J Nolutshungu (EFF) to ask the Minister of Transport:**

Considering the need for social distancing to prevent the spread of Covid-19, (a) how are social distancing measures enforced on aircraft and (b) what measures are in place to prevent the spread of the coronavirus on aircraft? NW2402E

**Reply:**

**South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA)**

1. The front and back rowsof the aircraft are left open to ensure that if a suspected case is picked up on board the passenger will be isolated during flight. The 1,5 – 2metre social distancing is not applied inside the aircraft because the new generation aircraft are fitted withsophisticated air filters calledHigh-Efficiency-Particulate Air Filters / Arrestors (HEPA) which cleans the air in the aircraft every 3 minutes and purifies the air circulation with 99,99% efficiency. These filters have been proven through tests to provide air that meets the standards set for theatres in hospitals. This is a much higher rate of flow than people experience in other indoor environments and means that passengers are provided with about 80 times as much air as they need to breathe.
2. Additional risk mitigation measures are well articulated in the guidelines / protocols that were issued by the Minister of Transport and which are implemented by all air operators including airports. These protocols start as passengers arrive and enter the airport terminal building, to when the passengersaboard the aircraft and until they arrive at the destination. These measures include among others the following:
* Screening of passengers as they enter the terminal building;
* Compulsory wearing of masks;
* Filling in of health declarations and collecting information for contact tracing purposes;
* Markings of airport floors ensuring social distancing;
* Regular sanitising and washing of hands and disinfection of all touchpoints e.g. check in counters, boarding, baggage trolleys, security check points etc.;
* Self-service and contactless check-in and boarding processes;
* Staggered boarding and disembarkation of passengers;
* Compulsory wearing of masks on board an aircraft and throughout the journey;
* Limited movement on board an aircraft;
* On-board magazines distribution discontinued;
* Pre-packaged meals where they are served;
* Aircraft are disinfected before each flight, amongst others.