



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | Friday, February 13, 2026

naamsa Welcomes SONA 2026 Commitments to Protect Manufacturing, Drive Automotive Competitiveness and Enable a Pragmatic Energy Transition.

PRETORIA: Friday, February 13, 2026: naamsa | The Automotive Business Council welcomes the 2026 State of the Nation Address (SONA) and government’s continued recognition of the automotive industry as a strategic pillar of South Africa’s manufacturing economy.

The President’s explicit focus on protecting jobs, strengthening industrial policy, advancing tariff reform, and accelerating the green economy transition affirms the central role of the automotive sector in driving GDP growth, exports, industrial capability and employment.

Protection of Manufacturing and Tariff Integrity

naamsa notes government’s commitment to close loopholes in the tariff structure and to introduce additional measures to protect and grow South Africa’s manufacturing base.

In a global trade environment characterised by excess capacity, intensifying import competition and heightened protectionism, **naamsa** emphasises that trade policy calibration must be precise, WTO-consistent and aligned with long-term domestic industrial sustainability.

Tshetlhe Litheko Chief Policy Officer of naamsa, stated, “The automotive industry welcomes the clear commitment to protect South Africa’s manufacturing base. Our sector operates in an increasingly competitive global environment, and maintaining domestic production scale is essential to safeguarding jobs, exports and long-term investment. Policy coherence, certainty and stability will be decisive in ensuring South Africa remains a preferred production location within global automotive value chains.”

New Energy Vehicle Transition: Certainty and Technology Neutrality Are Key

naamsa welcomes the announcement of a 150 percent tax deduction for investment in New Energy Vehicles (NEVs), alongside support for local battery production, as a strong and positive supply-side signal to investors and global parent companies allocating future vehicle platforms.

However, **naamsa** stresses that South Africa’s transition framework must remain technology-neutral, export-aligned and globally competitive. A credible transition pathway must explicitly recognise battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrids and hybrid technologies as part of a sequenced and realistic decarbonisation trajectory.

Mr. Litheko added, “Investment decisions for future vehicle platforms are being made now. Clarity on implementation rules, timelines and incentive structures is critical. A technology-neutral framework, combined with supportive domestic market measures, will significantly enhance South Africa’s competitiveness in attracting new model allocations and sustaining export growth.”

Infrastructure and Competitiveness Reform

naamsa further welcomes the continued focus on reforming ports, rail and the energy system. The automotive industry is export-intensive and logistics-sensitive, and improvements in freight efficiency, port performance and energy reliability are fundamental to restoring South Africa's structural competitiveness.

Way Forward

naamsa remains committed to structured engagement with government and labour to advance an integrated policy approach that:

- Protects domestic production scale;
- Enables a technology-neutral NEV transition;
- Secures and expands export market access,
- Supports localisation across the automotive value chain; and
- Sustains high-quality industrial employment.

The 2026 State of the Nation Address reinforces the strategic importance of the automotive sector to South Africa's economic future. The next critical step is detailed, credible and time-bound policy implementation that translates intent into investment certainty.

naamsa stands ready to partner with government to ensure that South Africa remains a stable, growing and globally competitive automotive manufacturing hub.

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ABOUT THE SA AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

- the automotive industry contributes 5.2% to GDP [3.2% manufacturing and 2.0% retail];
- in 2024, the export of vehicles and automotive components reached a record amount of R268.8 billion, equating to 14.7% of South Africa's total exports;
- the industry accounts for 22.6% of the country's manufacturing output;
- vehicles and components are exported to 155 international markets;
- the manufacturing segment employs ~115,000 people; and
- combined with multiplier effects, the industry sustains 498,000 jobs across the formal economy.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

- Since 2021, **naamsa** introduced associate membership with tangible benefits including industry data access and visibility;
- **naamsa** represents 42 companies manufacturing, assembling, distributing and importing new vehicles;
- Our vision is to be the most credible and respected automotive industry thought leader and partner for a globally competitive and transformed South African auto sector;
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