



THE TOBACCO INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

MEDIA RELEASE

***For Immediate Release
25 April 2012***

Beit Bridge: Destruction of thousands of illegal cigarettes

Beit Bridge Border Post - In a bold move against smuggling, Customs officials from the South African Revenue Service (SARS) on Tuesday, 24 April 2012, destroyed 796,700 illegal cigarettes that were seized at the Beit Bridge border post.

This is in follow up to the destruction in excess of 40,400,000 illegal cigarettes in Gauteng, the Free State and the Western Cape during April 2012.

Francois van der Merwe, CEO and Chairman of the Tobacco Institute of Southern Africa (TISA) commended authorities on their swift action against cigarette smugglers. "Around 80% of the illegal cigarettes coming into South Africa are from across the border, in Zimbabwe. Unscrupulous smugglers have broadened their routes to be able to smuggle cigarettes illegally into the market. These products unfortunately often end up in the South African market, contributing to the almost R4-billion loss in Government revenue annually," Mr van der Merwe added.

"This destruction is evidence of the integrated effort from law enforcement authorities to shut down the supply chain of smugglers. TISA conducts the destruction of illicit cigarettes on behalf of SARS by means of custom built mechanical shredders that break up the illicit product into fine pieces. These shreds are then ploughed into landfill sites and farmlands. All destructions take place under the supervisions of SARS officials. "We believe this partnership is the only way to successfully combat illicit trade in tobacco products," said Mr van der Merwe.

The destruction of illegal cigarettes is part of a larger plan to clear and destroy all seized illicit tobacco products from state warehouses during 2012.

Ends

Note to Editors:

The Tobacco Institute of Southern Africa (TISA) is the industry body of the tobacco industry in South Africa. TISA represents the entire value chain of the legitimate industry including tobacco farmers,

leaf processors, leaf dealers, manufacturers, importers and exporters of tobacco products. TISA's mandate and reach also extends into the SACU and SADC regions.

Media enquiries may be directed to:

Francois van der Merwe

Chairman and CEO

The Tobacco Institute of Southern Africa

Cell: 082 891 6252

Tel: (021) 421-0011 (office hours Mon-Fri)