



THE TOBACCO INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

MEDIA RELEASE

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Cooperation and innovation to fight illicit cigarette trade

At the International Customs Day Celebration on 26 January, The Tobacco Institute of Southern Africa (TISA) has been awarded a World Customs Organisation Certificate of Merit for “rendering exceptional service to the International Customs community”. TISA was one of only two external stakeholders to which this recognition was made.

The annual event is celebrated by 179 countries worldwide and is recognised by the World Customs Organisation. South African Revenue Service (SARS) fittingly chose to hold this year’s event at the Kopfontein Border post between South Africa and Botswana. This was the first SACU border post at which the modernization initiatives by SARS were rolled out. The initiatives have been designed to enable Customs to meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities presented by the 21st century border and trade environment. One such challenge is the illegal trade in cigarettes.

TISA was acknowledged as a model of how appropriate cooperation should be conducted between SARS and external stakeholders. This cooperation leads the way and sets the example. “We invest substantial time and resources, and we make a significant contribution within the regional context. This is a very rewarding experience, to be acknowledged by SARS for our contribution to the fight against illicit trade, and for the way we do it,” said Francois van der Merwe, TISA CEO.

Van der Merwe added that it is TISA's wish to collaborate with appropriate government departments, particularly the Department of Health, “to work with government to ensure that

some of the more recent proposals on tobacco regulation do not have the effect of inadvertently giving greater impetus to illicit trade.”

“TISA firmly believes in a collaborative approach in combating illicit trade not only in South Africa, but across the Southern African region and will continue to support SARS and other law enforcement agencies in efforts to eliminate the illicit trade in cigarettes, which has cost our country R12 billion over the past three years” he concludes.

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