



THE TOBACCO INSTITUTE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

MEDIA RELEASE

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HUGE BUST OF ILLEGAL PRODUCTS SEIZED AT MOZAMBIQUE BORDER

On Tuesday (March 12) Mozambican authorities seized over 4-million illegal cigarettes on the border between Mozambique and Zimbabwe, believed to be one of the biggest busts in recent years. The 'Pacific' brand of cigarettes were being smuggled illegally, by truck, from Zimbabwe into Mozambique, via a crossing point at Dombe, when authorities intercepted the massive consignment which has a street value of approximately R2 million. The trade in illegal cigarettes has escalated in recent years and has fast become a priority concern of both regional law enforcement authorities as well as the legal tobacco industry. Authorities across the Southern African region have been clamping down on the illegal cigarette trade, which is costing governments billions in lost revenue and threatening the sustainability of the legal tobacco industry.

Francois van der Merwe, CEO of the Tobacco Institute of Southern Africa (TISA) explains: "The illegal cigarette trade deprives governments of billions in lost revenue - in South Africa alone, more than R5 billion was lost to government last year from the sale of illegal cigarettes - money which could be channeled towards much needed public services. It also has other far-reaching social and economic consequences – threatening the jobs and livelihoods of thousands of people employed within the legal tobacco industry, as well as impacting on those retailers who stand to lose out because of unscrupulous criminals."

TISA has been actively working towards a more collaborative approach in combating illicit trade across border posts in the Southern African region. Various Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) on combating illicit trade have been concluded with a number of neighbouring countries, including Mozambique. "The illegal trade in cigarettes occurs both within countries and across borders, and as such, it is necessary to work together within a legitimate framework to curb this growing problem," comments Van der Merwe.

“Mozambican law enforcement officials are to be commended for their continued vigilance and action that resulted in this seizure. We believe that there should be increased resource allocation to enable greater law enforcement on borders as well as dedicated investigation teams. Furthermore, a co-ordinated approach, involving SACU and SADC law enforcement authorities is needed, not only to eliminate the illicit trade in cigarettes but other illegal products too. We remain committed to working with all the relevant parties in an effort to clamp down and eradicate the escalating growth of an illicit economy,” Van der Merwe concluded.

NOTES TO EDITOR

- 4 Million cigarettes translates in 200 000 packets of 20s
- Pacific is a cigarette brand manufactured by Savanna Tobacco in Zimbabwe
- The MoU between TISA and Mozambique was signed on 6 December 2011.
- Currently no MoU exists between TISA and Zimbabwe – it is hoped that an MoU can be established in the near future.

Media Enquiries may be referred to:

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