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Significance of the United Nations Principles for consumer product safety

Statement

National Consumer Commission of South Africa

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STATEMENT: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS PRINCIPLES FOR CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY

This year marks 15 years of consumer protection regulation in South Africa under the new legal framework, following the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act in 2008 and the subsequent establishment of the National Consumer Commission in 2011.

South Africa has been implementing the United Nations Guidelines on Consumer Protection.

The resolve of putting consumers first was further reignited on 15 December 2025 as the United Nations General Assembly adopted a landmark resolution establishing the first-ever United Nations Principles for Consumer Product Safety. South Africa together with Brazil, Costa Rica, Peru, Spain, and Sweden sponsored the resolution.

This is a decisive response to growing global risks posed by unsafe consumer products, particularly in the context of cross-border and online trade. The principles provide a global framework to strengthen product safety, promote international cooperation, and enhance consumer protection across markets.

The United Nations Principles on Consumer Product Safety are therefore timely.

South Africa currently faces a huge challenge of illicit trade. It is estimated that at least R100 billion is lost to illicit trade in South Africa.

To strengthen consumer protection regulations on product safety, the Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition intends to publish Track-and-Trace regulations on goods. The regulations will mainly target illicit trade in tobacco, alcohol, food, and consumer appliances.

This intervention will ensure that illicit products are easily identified, monitored and removed from the market, protecting legitimate businesses from unfair competition and reduce revenue losses to the fiscus, and for goods sold in the marketplace can be traced from source.

In addition, to ensure compliance with product labelling and price disclosure, the National Consumer Commission will be publishing guidelines to this effect, to ensure businesses, particularly small businesses, comply with product labelling requirements in terms of the Consumer Protection Act to promote product safety.

In conclusion, the next immediate task is for UN member states to implement these principles, as it is through a coherent and coordinated framework that we can ensure consumers are adequately protected from unsafe products.

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