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Joint statement by the National Department of Health and the South African Bureau of Standards

The National Department of Health (NDoH) and the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) reassure South Africa that government issued condoms, which are branded as MAX condoms, are safe to use. This follows reports of condoms that were being recycled and re-sold in Vietnam.

“Condoms cannot and should not be shared, reused or recycled. South Africa has made great strides in reducing the spread of HIV&AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and we will not compromise the health of our nation. We remain vigilant and committed to ensuring that quality health products and services are available to every community. In South Africa, the National Department of Health (NDoH) distributes a billion free condoms annually. Every batch of these condoms, which are branded as MAX, is subject to stringent manufacturing & packing requirements and testing is conducted against a South African National Standard. South African MAX condoms are of the highest quality and South Africans are encouraged to use these and to dispose of them responsibly,” says Director General of Health Dr Sandile Buthelezi.

Each pack of MAX condoms contains individually foiled packed condoms, in lubricant. The packaging clearly stipulates the batch and lot number, the expiration date and the ‘SABS Approved’ quality Mark. South Africans should not use expired condoms, or packages that seem to be damaged or leaking. Each condom can only be used once and should be wrapped in tissue or toilet paper after use and disposed of in a bin.

“Every batch of MAX condoms that is distributed in South Africa, is subject to stringent testing and quality control by the SABS. The SABS tests every batch of MAX condoms in dedicated, accredited laboratory based in Groenkloof, Pretoria. The condoms that are issued by the NDoH are subjected to additional testing and sampling criteria to increase the quality controls that are contained in the national and global standards. MAX condoms are of a superior quality than other brands that are sold in South Africa, simply because of the additional, independent testing of every batch that is produced,” says Jodi Scholtz, Lead Administrator of the SABS.

MAX condoms are tested in accordance to *SANS/ISO 4074: requirements for natural rubber latex condoms*. Additional sampling and packaging criteria as set out by the NDoH, are:

- Inflation bursting pressure and volume for elasticity and stretch
- Testing of holes in the condoms
- Design testing which includes the determination of lubricant in each packet
- Determination of dimensions (length, width and thickness)
- Testing of packet integrity (water immersion)

– Visual inspection

If a sample fails any of the tests the whole batch will be destroyed, thus ensuring that no defective products will enter the South African market.

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