



## ALLIANCE POUR LE CONTROLE DU TABAC EN AFRIQUE (ACTA)

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Her Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma  
Cooperative Governance & Traditional Affairs - CoGTA  
Tel.: +27 12 334 0600  
87 Hamilton Str, Arcadia  
Pretoria, Republic of South Africa

June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020

Her Excellency,

### **Congratulations and support from the African Tobacco Control Alliance**

Tobacco control actors and stakeholders the world over have been following keenly, the evolution of measures taken by the South African government to protect the health of its citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic. Of particular interest is the current ban on the sale of tobacco products during the imposed lockdown to stem the spread of the virus.

The African Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA), a network of civil society organizations engaged in tobacco control in the continent, has noted with great satisfaction, your resolve and efforts to keep tobacco products off the market till the COVID-19 is completely sorted in South Africa. With membership in 39 African countries, ATCA expresses its support to your initiatives and hopes other countries can learn from South Africa.

Indeed, several studies ascertain that [smoking is most likely associated with the negative progression and adverse outcomes of COVID-19](#), and experts continue to warn based on studies, that [vaping could render individuals more vulnerable](#) to the disease, yet the tobacco industry still sets out to push for the availability of its products during lockdowns.

We are disheartened to that at such a time when the public health community universally agrees that [it is absolutely vital for smokers to quit](#), tobacco multinationals have been involved in a series of initiatives to get governments to let tobacco shops run as essential services, and tobacco products sold as essential goods. The tobacco industry does this despite the numerous pieces of evidence that tobacco products expose consumers to grave COVID-19 consequences.

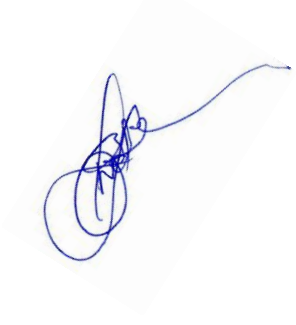
We understand that the South African government is undergoing a remarkable volume of pressure at this time from the tobacco industry. Tobacco multinationals are using traditional tactics, like litigation to pressurize the government and scare it into backing down from the current ban on tobacco sales. But we reassured by your strong resolve to prioritise the health

and wellbeing of the South African people, rather than succumb to the tobacco industry which only cares about its commercial interest.

The African tobacco control community salutes your determination to face the tobacco industry during this very difficult moment. We assure you of our full support to measures aimed at keeping tobacco products inaccessible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are sure that strong tobacco control measures through the adoption of the tobacco products and electronic delivery systems bill will help control this situation and save lives of millions of South Africans.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mr. Akinbode M. Oluwafemi  
Chairperson, Board of Directors  
African Tobacco Control Alliance

**CC:** His Excellency Dr Zweli Mkhize  
Minister of Health  
Ministry of Health  
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