



Remarks by Acting Commissioner Hardin Ratshisusu at the ***Launch of the Illicit Economy Task Forces and Cheka Daai Ding Campaign***

1 December 2025, Sandton, South Africa

Good morning.

Thank you for the invitation.

Next year, we shall be marking 15 years of consumer protection 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.

There has been significant progress in a number of areas of enforcement, particularly on general terms and conditions on the sale of goods; however, several issues remain and still require attention.

Today, the focus is on illicit trade.

Illicit trade poses the greatest risk to the South African economy, estimated to drain billions of Rands negatively affecting sectors such as tobacco, alcohol, clothing and textiles, pharmaceuticals and electronics.

At the global level, illicit trade is estimated at US\$2 trillion per year, roughly 3% of world GDP.

In South Africa, estimates suggest that at least R100 billion is lost to illicit trade every year.

It is therefore timely that the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa is today launching the Illicit Economy Task Forces and *Cheka Daai Ding* Campaign.

The campaign will not only increase the level of cooperation between stakeholders but also raise awareness to consumers on illicit goods as well as associated harmful effects.

With this campaign, it is evident that a number of actions are required across the board.

I shall highlight six measures that can help address the issues of illicit trade.

First, the need to **strengthen enforcement** through multi-agency Illicit Trade Task Teams, like the one launched today.

Second, there is a need for **Public-Private Partnerships**, as industry intelligence is essential in order to successfully combat illicit trade. There should also be a strategy around resource pooling between the private sector and regulatory authorities for maximum impact.

Third, there is a need for **smarter regulation** to curb illicit trade. For instance, there is scope for more consumer protection measures inasmuch as there is a need to address other aspects of regulation, such as excise or tax gaps.

Fourth, it is time to optimise existing **technology and tracing** capabilities. There is more scope to utilise digital track-and-trace systems, AI and data analytics to systematically identify areas of concern in markets.

Fifth, **consumer education** is crucial. It is not enforcement alone that will ensure the challenges of illicit trade are effectively addressed; it will also require consumer education to ensure consumers make informed choices.

Sixth, it is important to strengthen **cooperation** at the regional and global level through structures such as the AU, SACU, SADC, UNCTAD, OECD, BRICS and World Customs Organisation.

These actions can strengthen measures to combat illicit trade.

However, it is important to prioritise sectors affected the most, for high impact.

For effective regulatory oversight, the National Consumer Commission is engaging the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition on possible regulations to enhance tracking and tracing of goods, to strengthen existing consumer protection tools.

This could also be an important measure to monitor the marketplace to ensure goods traded are safe and of good quality, from a consumer protection regulation perspective.

In conclusion, it is evident that illicit trade threatens industry competitiveness, economic development and growth, and consumer safety, and further presents many other socioeconomic consequences.

As such, a united front on stronger enforcement, smarter policy, and the use of modern technology and consumer advocacy is required to disrupt illicit networks. These actions can restore safe, fair and sustainable markets that work for society.

The campaign you have launched today is a call to action; it is a significant intervention necessary to tackle concerns of illicit trade.

Consumers deserve markets where medicines heal, not harm; where appliances do not explode but function; and where ethical businesses can thrive.

Let us spare no effort to ensure consumers are protected from unsafe and low-quality goods.

Thank you.