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PRESENTATION TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE: TOBACCO PRODUCTS CONTROL AMENDMENT BILL

*Presented by Ms Theda Leonie
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Thank you, ladies and gentlemen who represent the Health Ministry of the Parliament of South Africa, for the privilege to express the concerns of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to you regarding the Proposed Amendment of the Tobacco Control Products Act.
- 1.2 I represent about 300,000 (three hundred thousand) members and adherents of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Southern Africa. Among the many fundamental teachings of my church is the firm belief that respecting our health and bodies is required as part of our worship to God. We furthermore believe that abstinence from harmful narcotics and drugs should be a lifestyle and thus we wish to make our presentation today.

2 TOBACCO CONTROL IN THE SOCIETY

- 2.1 The laws which have been promulgated by the South African parliament which regulates the sale, purchase and warnings on tobacco products is commendable and ranks among the best in the world today.
- 2.2 Parliament has provided the mechanism to curtail the spread of diseases such as lung and cervical cancer which threatens our booming economy through absences from work and draining the resources of their employers and medical aids – as well as State hospitals when such patients cannot afford private medical treatment.
- 2.3 Many buildings are used by the members of the public are sensitive to the creation of a smoke-free environment. But there are still cases of victims who have been diseased through the exposure to and inhalation of side-stream tobacco smoke, especially toddlers and young children who have no means of protecting themselves.
- 2.4 The curtailing of advertising tobacco products have had minimal effect on our society. The lack of advertising has not been a major contributor to the decline in the number of smokers because **the bad behaviour is not taught, but caught.**
- 2.5 Many new smokers come into the market not because of advertising or the curtailing thereof but through the free availability of such products in virtually every shop in the country. The tobacco industry have raised no complaints about declining profits nor has it been expressed that it is with regret that the manufacturers had to close down or downsize or lay off employees because of

the lack of advertising. It is true that new and aspiring smokers see smoking as glamorous and chic.

- 2.6 There is another subtle element which contributes to the rise in the number of new smokers in this country: **subversive advertising** to which many citizens of this country is exposed. Such subtlety is evident in pictures portrayed in the print media, sport stars puffing away, motor car racing and other pictures which is associated with the macho man and the successful businessman and beautiful women. The tobacco industry is still in control, without the effort of direct advertising.
- 2.7 Exposure to cigarette smoking seems to have become the gateway for many teen drug users and addicts. Currently, there is no control over the manner in which young children have access to tobacco products – older persons such as parents and others do not recognise that the reason for the publication of warnings on cigarette packages is as valid inside their homes and vehicles as it would be inside buildings where smoking is forbidden. Stricter control should be exercised and the rights of children, which is enshrined in the Bill of Human Rights, should be enforced. Courts should deal more vigorously and swiftly with offenders.
- 2.8 The World Health Organisation's Framework and Convention on Tobacco Control should be implemented as soon as possible in order to streamline the SA Government's implementation of stricter control over the indiscriminate usage of tobacco products.

3 CONCLUSION

Now is an excellent opportunity to introduce stricter controls so that by the year 2010, when the Soccer World Cup is staged in South Africa, we as a nation can take our place with pride among many advanced nations who take seriously the exposure of the vulnerable members of society to the ruthless and devastating effect of the usage of tobacco products. Let the appropriate legislation receive the proper attention and support from our law courts and legal profession so that this Amendment is not seen as another exercise in futility.

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Johannesburg