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**Plastics | SA**

## **Budget 2019: Tax on single-use plastics not the answer**

PRESS STATEMENT BY ANTON HANEKOM  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: PLASTICS SA

Plastics SA notes the commitment in the Budget Review to reform existing environmental taxes. We believe this is an opportunity to assess which of these taxes are achieving their environmental objectives, and the impact they are having on the economy and jobs.

The plastic bag levy, for example, has had little impact on consumer behaviour and has not delivered the environmental gains it was intended to. The Department of Environmental Affairs acknowledged to Parliament that consumers have continued to use plastic bags, despite the plastic bag levy quadrupling between 2003 and 2018.

The truth is that the plastic bag levy has done little for the environment. It is just another revenue stream for government and is not even ring-fenced for the purpose of recycling. More could have been done if the money was used for the intended purpose - we would have been able to achieve more in terms of recycling.

We also note that government will be investigating a tax on single-use plastics, including straws, beverage cups and lids, and containers to curb their use and encourage recycling.

The plastics industry fully supports efforts to stop plastic waste polluting the environment. And we believe it is high time that government started confronting this issue head-on. It is simply unacceptable that more than 8 million tons of plastic end up in the world's oceans every year. People want to recycle and do the responsible thing but there is simply not sufficient serviced waste management infrastructure in place.

However, while a tax on single-use plastics might satisfy an emotional impulse, it is not the answer. A tax on single-use plastics will do little to change behaviour, and it won't stop plastic pollution. All a tax will do is drive up inflation, and put pressure on an industry that employs over 60 000 people.

We need to work towards developing innovative environmentally sound products. Instead of taxing the industry and the consumer, government needs to work with us to develop these alternatives.

Plastics SA is determined to find the answer to problematic plastic usage. We are developing a workable plan to deal with single-use plastics that is aligned to international initiatives and takes into account our environmental, socio-political and economic realities.

We look forward to working with all role-players in the industry, as well as government and civil society, to find a genuine solution to plastic pollution.

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