PRESS RELEASE

PLASTICS SA AND SANBWA LAUNCH NEW AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE AND VERSATILITY OF PLASTICS AS RUGBY SEASON KICKS OFF

Johannesburg, *2 April 2022*. South Africans are gearing up for an exciting rugby season in 2022. After two years of limited games and spectator participation due to COVID-19, faithful supporters around the country cannot wait to get back into stadiums to show their support for their teams participating in the various local and international rugby matches. These matches will take place over the next few months, including the Varsity Cup, United Rugby Championship, Curry Cup, Craven Week and the World Rugby Sevens Series.

Conscious of the impact that such large spectator events have on the environment, Plastics SA and the South African National Bottled Water Association (SANBWA) have teamed up to raise awareness of the importance of using and discarding plastics responsibly. An advertising campaign to educate future sports players and enthusiasts will be published in SA Rugby Magazine, as well as online making use of the various social media platforms.

Explains Anton Hanekom, Executive Director of Plastics SA: "Over the past few months, we have been educating consumers about the importance and versatility of plastics in our everyday life and the invaluable role it plays in modern society with our ***Fit for Purpose*** campaign. Whether used to save lives in hospitals, incorporated into technology and cars or extending the shelf life of food by preventing breakage and spoilage, plastics are functional, innovative and trusted to provide the most affordable, practical and suitable solutions for many uses in our modern world today. Sport is no exception, where plastics are relied upon to make the game possible (e.g. sports clothes and equipment, togs, balls, landing mats), but are also vital to keep players safe (e.g. mouth guards, scrum helmets and safety equipment)".

SANBWA Chief Executive Officer, Charlotte Metcalf, adds that an increasing number of scientific studies are countering the anti-plastic wave that seems to have swept around the globe. "We are living in an era where people are calling for alternatives to their plastic packaging without fully understanding the true impact these substitutes will have on the environment and their pockets. Ample research has proven that replacing plastic in consumer products and packaging with alternatives (that perform the same function) could increase the environmental costs as much as fourfold. It's therefore important we keep a level head and don't demand a change which might create more and bigger problems than the ones we are trying to solve. Buying food and beverages in plastic packaging that have been designed for recyclability – and then recycling those – is currently the best option for South Africa," she says.

One such a study published by Trucost points out that over 342-million tonnes of alternative material would be needed to replace the 84-million tonnes of plastic used in consumer products and packaging. This has major implications for costs and environmental impacts associated with manufacturing (such as raw material, energy and water use) as well as distribution.

“People need to make informed decisions based on sound, scientific research instead of kneejerk reactions and emotional arguments. For example, when we analyse its entire lifecycle, a water bottle (made from 50% recycled plastic) generates at least three times less carbon emissions than packaging made from alternative materials. In South Africa, we have high PET recycling rates thanks to the availability of technology that makes closed loop recycling (i.e. bottle-to-bottle recycling) possible and supports the circular economy for PET packaging,” Charlotte advocates.

“We are excited about the growing collaboration between industries and role-players to clean-up the environment, encourage recycling and support collection efforts. As with any team sport, it is the way the individual players work together and support each other that ultimately determines its success. Plastics SA is grateful to work with SANBWA and other industry leaders as we step our efforts to reach greater audiences and effect lasting change,” Anton concludes.

For more information, visit www.plasticsinfo.co.za or www.sanbwa.org.za.

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