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Media Release

## **SABS drives the principles of transparency to eliminate Technical Barriers to Trade**

The South African Bureau of Standards (SABS), in collaboration with the World Trade Organization (WTO), hosted a virtual seminar on the **WTO Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement's Transparency Framework** that discussed the National Regulatory Organisations' responsibilities in the drafting of policies, regulations, standards and conformity assessment procedures.

"The principle of *transparency* underpins the Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement and this is attained through the framework of: notifications, the establishment of enquiry points and publication requirements. In essence, all states that are members of the World Trade Organization have an obligation to drive transparency by making available all the documentation related to the enablement of trade within borders and to be available to answer enquiries from member states," said Jodi Scholtz, Lead Administrator at SABS.

South Africa as one of the 164 countries that are a signatory to the World Trade Organization TBT Agreement and it has a responsibility to ensure that all technical regulations, standards, and conformity assessment procedures are non-discriminatory and that they do not create unnecessary obstructions to trade.

The South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) has been designated the WTO TBT Enquiry Point Office with the goal of consolidating the technical knowledge of government experts regarding the preparation, analysis and submission of technical regulations.

"The SABS has the responsibility of coordinating and resolving all enquiries that arise from both local and international stakeholders that experience barriers to trade. Hundreds of alerts and enquiries are dealt with on a monthly basis and these queries range from reviewing regulations, to managing queries on local trade conditions and any requests for country contacts regarding equipment and infrastructure," said Scholtz.

During the seminar, national regulators were reminded of the key provisions, principles and e-tools available to assist and enable the success implementation of the WTO TBT Agreement.

"Notifications relating to regulations, changes to conformity assessment procedures or new or amended standards can have an impact on trade and it is important to ensure that South Africa does not intentionally or unintentionally restrict or hinder open trade," explained Scholtz.

Any citizen can access the WTO ePing portal via <https://epingalert.org/en> to receive alerts and updates on the regulations issued by member states of the World Trade Organization. The site has a search function that enables users to research product specifications by market or country and by industry classification. These TBT services are available for free and are intended to encourage transparent global trade.

### **Ends**

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### **Notes:**

*For alerts on changes in regulations or product specifications, citizens can use the [ePing](https://epingalert.org/en) portal or send an email to [wto@sabs.co.za](mailto:wto@sabs.co.za)*