

MEDIA RELEASE:

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## **New KZN condom manufacturing plant will help curb the spread of HIV infections and increase life expectancy, says KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo**

KWAZULU-NATAL Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has hailed the official launch of the province's new multi-million rand condom manufacturing plant as a significant step in government's quest to reduce the spread of HIV infections in the province - while increasing life expectancy.

The new condom factory will be situated at the Dube Trade Port's Special Economic Zone, right next door to the King Shaka International Airport. It is a first for the province and only the second one in the country.

KwaZulu-Natal aims to distribute at least 212 million free condoms each financial year, in its bid to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS infections.

When it is fully functional, the new factory will produce no fewer than 700 000 condoms per day, some of which will be exported to other African states.

The launch of the new factory condom comes just months after National Health Minister Dr Aaron Motsoaledi announced in his budget speech that South Africa will soon get its own facility, Ketlaphela, which will start producing antiretroviral drugs in 2019.

Speaking after a visit to the new condom factory site, MEC Dhlomo said: "We are very pleased that the plan to build a condom manufacturing plant in KZN - a place that needs it most because of the pandemic of HIV - has come to fruition.

"In every intervention that we put in place to improve public health outcomes, KwaZulu-Natal must lead and be ahead. Therefore the presence of this condom manufacturing plant will go a long way to assist our programmes and prevent illnesses from spreading."

He said he would call upon condom manufacturers to consider lowering the price of female condoms, which are currently 10 times more expensive than male condoms. "The price of female condoms makes them inaccessible because they're expensive."

MEC Dhlomo said limited access to female condoms leads to challenges because men are generally still stubborn, whereas they still have the upper hand to make decisions that may affect the sexual health of their partners negatively.

"The brunt of HIV and Aids is heavier on females than it is for males. So, if you were able to make female condoms more easily accessible, you begin to empower women because the tools to ensure their sexual health are still skewed against them."

In his keynote address, MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs Sihle Zikalala said the KwaZulu-Natal Growth Fund had played a leading role in

assisting the project promoters with the structuring of the transaction.

In March 2016, the KZN Growth Fund approved R42.5m debt funding towards the setting up of the facility. This resulted in the KZN Growth Fund being the only funder to the project.

HBM-SA Health Protection Services has invested R150 million in the project.

“The company will play a crucial role in government's programme that provides free condoms to everyone in South Africa, which, we believe, has contributed to the average life expectancy increasing from 56 to 60 years. Furthermore, we are confident that this programme will continue to contribute towards a projected decline of 48% in new HIV infections among our adult population,” said Zikalala.

“For the first time, HBM-SA Health Protection Services, will bring about the local production of condoms. Previously, manufacturing of condoms was based offshore, and the company was importing its condoms. However, South Africa offered it a more competitive manufacturing environment, which comes in the form of Special Economic Zone incentives within Dube Trade Port coupled with its strategic location. This move not only will create over 140 local jobs and encourage skills transfer but it also allows the company to respond timeously to our needs and those of other developing nations within the continent,” said Zikalala.



*KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo and MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs Sihle Zikalala and other dignitaries, at the sod turning ceremony for the new condom manufacturing plant*

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