



**MINISTER
TRADE, INDUSTRY AND COMPETITION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday, 05 May 2020

For Immediate Release

**Clothing, Textile, Footwear, and Leather Industry consultative meeting with
Minister Ebrahim Patel**



Picture provided: Employees from Prestige in Maitland, Cape Town manufacturing face masks

Yesterday, leading figures from the Retail - Clothing Textile, Footwear and Leather sector representatives held a consultative virtual meeting with the Minister of Trade,

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Industry, and Competition (the dtic), Mr Ebrahim Patel, to review the readiness of shops and factories for the new Level 4 alert level. The meeting agreed to develop a common framework on implementation of Covid-ready workplaces that can serve as a guide for the industry.

The recent move from the hard lockdown to Level Four has seen greater parts of the retail and manufacturing value chain open up.

Starting 1 May, clothing and footwear retailers started opening for customers buying winter and children's apparel and footwear. This is the first time that dedicated clothing and footwear retailers have opened since the lockdown started on 26 March 2020.

Level 4 also enables manufacturers to begin manufacturing with at least 30% normal employment for all clothing, textile, footwear and leather goods; up to 50% for winter goods; and up to 100% for children's and baby clothes, and personal protective equipment like face masks.

Retail CEOs provided the meeting with feedback on the reopening of stores and measures they have taken to manage the return to work.

Mr. Anthony Thunström, the Foschini Group's CEO and chair of the National Clothing Retail Federation (NCRF) welcomed the move to reopen clothing retail stores and noted the value of close collaboration between Government and industry. He noted that "without your help and your department's efforts this would not have been possible...we have to balance to keep South Africa healthy, while at the same time allowing some much-needed economic activity...and we are happy to adopt the additional occupational health and safety requirements".

During the meeting, the Minister, retail CEOs, manufacturers and labour representatives engaged on matters that could be covered in the framework agreement for the industry to protect employees in manufacturing and retail, as well as customers in retail stores well.



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“The spirit of collaboration within the NCRF is to support government’s initiatives. The terms of all back-to-work protocols starts with us...We [Retailers] are a big employer of people, so if we take care of our workforce in support of government’s initiatives then we should also identify how to communicate to our customers the same health and safety protocols...we have capabilities to also support our customer to implement government’s initiatives, ” Ms. Zyda Rylands, CEO of Woolworths SA stated at the meeting.

The Apparel and Textile Association of SA’s (ATASA) deputy chairperson, Mr. Herman Pillay, emphasised that “as industry we should look into supporting more of government’s response efforts in our workplaces. We can look at unoccupied spaces within our buildings to see if we can work with local health departments to assist government’s Covid-19 response measures, such as testing”.

“The localisation efforts in support of the demand for PPE has added viability for our local industries and has been a saving grace to many”, said Graham Choice, chairperson of the South African Apparel Association (SAAA).

The industry now has more than 350 manufacturers who have said they are ready to produce cloth face-masks, ranging from micro-enterprises employing a few people, to SMEs and larger firms.

Proposals were heard on the phasing in of shift workers, social distancing for employees and customers and other necessary health protocols, to avoid a sudden increase in the spread of COVID-19 now that more parts of the retail and manufacturing are opening up.

Government provided details of the risks factors taken into account in the different alert levels and what could be done to reduce risks, enabling the economy to move more rapidly to Level 3 and below. The key, Minister Patel noted, was greater levels of testing, together with improved social distancing and health protocol measures.



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“As we navigate the uncharted terrain of the Covid-19 reality, it will take our collective efforts to ensure we reduce risks of infection while we reopen our economy and adjust to our new normal,” said Minister Patel.

“We are facing an unprecedented disruption of lives and economic well-being. That challenge of Covid-19 demands acute and targeted measures to safeguard all of us. The public, private and civil society sectors need to work together to ensure our society’s safety, particularly in a phase of reopening more economic sectors,” Minister Ebrahim Patel noted at the meeting.

“Our society is truly remarkable. South Africans are heeding the call to make our own products and buy our own products – in the effort to heal our society from Covid-19 impacts,” he said.

Union leader Mr. Andre Kriel told the meeting that “the period of the lockdown has been extremely, extremely tough on workers. Despite that we want to make it clear that as workers and the trade union we support fully what government has introduced. This is a fair balance between dealing with health risks and getting workers back to work”.

The CTFL sector representatives also agreed to form a working group to provide policy inputs and practical evaluations to government as we navigate the Covid-19 terrain.

Details of the R-CTFL COVID-19 framework will be released in the coming days.

List of participants

Retail Companies	Manufacturing	Organised Labour
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Mr Price Group	South African Apparel Association (SAA-A)	Southern Africa Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU)
Pepkor	Apparel Manufacturers of SA (AMSA)	
Pick n Pay	Southern African Footwear & Leather Industries Association (SAFLIA)	
Queenspark	Celrose Clothing	
Edcon Limited		
Truworths		
Woolworths		
National Clothing Retail Federation (NCRF)		

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Issued by: The Department of Trade, Industry and Competition