

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY
FRIDAY, 8 MAY 2020
DUE DATE: 22 May 2020

785. Mrs A Steyn (DA) to ask the President of the Republic:

- (1) On what empirical evidence did the National Coronavirus Command Council rely to collectively (a) ban the sale of tobacco products during the national lockdown to curb the spread of Covid-19 and (b) contradict the announcement he made on 23 April 2020 that the sale of tobacco products would be permitted during level 4 of the Government's Risk-Adjusted Strategy by continuing to enforce the ban on the sale of tobacco products;

- (2) on what date is it envisaged that the ban on the sale of tobacco products will be lifted?

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REPLY

The decision to promulgate the Disaster Management Regulations, including regulation 27 (of the Regulations), which prohibits the sale of tobacco products, e-cigarettes and related products was taken after careful consideration, not only of the submissions received, but also the relevant medical literature focusing *inter alia* on the effects of smoking on public and individual health, especially in the face of a respiratory illness such as Covid-19.

After my initial announcement on 23 April 2020, following representations that were made by various organisations and individuals and further consideration of relevant medical studies and advice, a different position was ultimately adopted by the National Coronavirus Command Council and thereafter by Cabinet before the regulations were promulgated.

At this stage, it is difficult to determine when the ban on the sale of tobacco and related products will be lifted. This will depend on such factors as the progression of the disease in South Africa, the readiness of our health systems and evolving knowledge on the nature and impact of the virus itself.