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SMART Responds to Kenya’s Used Clothing & Shoe Ban

ABINGDON, Md. (April 28, 2020)— The Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART) is urging Kenyan officials to reverse their recent COVID-19 related ban on the importation of used garments (Mitumba) and shoes, noting that all available research on the virus shows they are not a threat to those who wear them.

Representatives of SMART, a nonprofit association of for-profit businesses in the textile reuse and recycling industry, were notified by the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) on April 1, 2020 that the country’s importation of used garments and shoes had been suspended until further notice. [KEBS said](#) it was implementing the ban as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) – a decision made under the false pretenses that the virus can be transmitted through used footwear and textiles.

While numerous studies including those published in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) and [The Lancet](#) have shown that COVID-19 may be detectable on hard, non-porous surfaces like plastics and metals for hours and potentially up to 2 to 3 days, they also reveal the virus is even less likely to survive on soft, porous surfaces like textiles including rugs, carpets, shoes and clothing – whether they might be new or used.

According to guidelines issued by the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), mitigating whatever small risk might be present on soft, porous surfaces like textiles is easily addressed by laundering the textile according to manufacturer instructions in warm water. This advice is supported by the fact that countless hospitals and other medical facilities are utilizing reusable linens and personal protective equipment/hospital apparel to protect healthcare workers that are treating patients infected with COVID-19. Furthermore, used clothing that is shipped overseas is typically in transit for weeks, if not months at a time – far longer than the virus has ever been shown to survive on even the most hospitable non-porous hard surfaces.

“Like so many others around the world, SMART and its members are engaged in the world-wide fight against a common enemy: COVID-19,” says Jackie King, the association’s executive director. “SMART and its members are committed to working with governments, businesses and individuals to slow the progression of this disease, embrace mitigation measures and protect the most vulnerable among us. However, as the situation currently presents itself, there is absolutely no supporting evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted through secondhand textiles,” she continues. “We believe Kenya’s recent



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ban is a disingenuous attempt to stop secondhand clothing trade masquerading as a measure to protect its citizens.”

For more information on SMART, visit www.smartasn.org. Please direct media inquiries for SMART to Patrick Seidl at 410-420-2001 or by email at Patrick.Seidl@fallstongroup.com.

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About SMART

Established in 1932, the Secondary Materials and Recycled Textiles Association (SMART) is an international nonprofit trade association that strengthens the economic opportunities of its diverse membership by promoting the interdependence of the for-profit textile recycling industry segments and providing a common forum for networking, education and trade. SMART members use and convert recycled and secondary materials from used clothing, commercial laundries and non-woven, off spec material, new mills ends and paper from around the world. SMART member companies create thousands of jobs worldwide, proving each day you can make money by being social responsible.