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SACTWU WELCOMES H&M's COLLABORATION WITH LOCAL DESIGNER

The COSATU-affiliated Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union (SACTWU) welcomes the announcement today by H&M, the global clothing retailer, that it will be collaborating with South African designer, Palesa Mokubung, and her Mantsho label.

SACTWU is a long-standing supporter of Mokubung's work. For example, the Mantsho label was featured as far back as at SACTWU's 2008 Fashion Festival in a fashion show held in the cutting room of the Levi Strauss SA factory in Cape Town.

The union and its clothing, textile, footwear and leather (CTFL) members look forward to seeing South African product in H&M's stores. Until now, none of the products sold in H&M's 23 local stores have been made in South Africa.

As foreign retailers, like H&M, Zara and Cotton On, have grown their South African footprint, they have increasingly taken market share away from domestic retailers. This has caused a ripple effect in which local factories supplying those domestic retailers are losing orders, and job losses and factory closures are the result.

Importantly, H&M's additional announcement on 25 March 2019 that it has established sourcing operations in South Africa and will commence testing of local sourcing provides SACTWU with hope that some of the damage done by foreign retailers to local jobs can be mitigated, and subsequently reversed.

H&M's intention to work with Mokubung and test local sourcing follows protests by SACTWU members at selected H&M stores in October 2017, a SACTWU/Industrial Development Corporation (IDC)-led visit by H&M buyers to local CTFL factories in May 2018 and several subsequent meetings between H&M, the South African government and industry stakeholders.

SACTWU congratulates H&M on moving forward with this local sourcing project. The union views this collaboration with Mokubung as the first part of a much deeper collaboration. From SACTWU's side, to assist H&M with its designer collaboration, the union has helped to ensure

that compliant producers manufacture the Mantsho products.

H&M's local sourcing project represents the power of constructive social dialogue and the promise such dialogue holds to

re-shape some of the harmful components of global trade. We look forward to a positive outcome and growing relationship with H&M in which their local sourcing footprint is deepened substantially, where their contribution to employment creation in local CTFL factories is expanded significantly, and where their global reach can be used to showcase South African design and quality, manufactured under decent work conditions.

Issued by

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