# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 3520**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 04 SEPTEMBER 2015**

**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 37)**

**Ms N I Tarabella Marchesi (DA) to ask the Minister of Health:**

Whether, with reference to the large number of skin lightening products containing the banned substance hydroquinone which is still available in many informal trading areas in the country, his department has any plans to (a) launch awareness campaigns on the dangers of using the specified products, (b) launch raids in conjunction with (i) the Medicines Control Council, (ii) the SA Police Service and/or (iii) any other government department to confiscate the specified products and/or (c) fine the traders selling these dangerous products; if not, why not in each case?

###### NW4184E

**REPLY:**

The Department of Health acknowledges that skin lighteners are as much a social problem as a medical problem. The public regards skin lighteners as cosmetics and do not see the harm in the use of these products.

1. Previously the Department of Health conducted awareness campaigns on the dangers of using specific hydroquinone containing products through posters and pamphlets, sensitizing the public in this regard. It is the intention of the Department to continue with these awareness campaigns.
2. The Department, in conjunction with Commercial Crime, Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation, SARS, Interpol, SAPS, National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications (NRCS) and the Company of Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) ran joint operations in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town from 19-21 August 2015. During the raids, illegal counterfeit and skin lighteners to the value of about R26m were confiscated, people arrested and a number of case dockets opened.

As per the legal processes, these matters will be attended to by the courts with appropriate fines imposed to the traders selling these products.

1. Recently in a case brought by the Department in a matter against traders selling illegal medicines in the Tembisa Magistrate’s Court (1 September 2015), the court found the accused guilty as charged with a fine of 1 year imprisonment or payment of a fine of R10 000.

END.