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MEDIA RELEASE: For Immediate Release

UNBS MAINTAINS BAN ON COSMETICS CONTAINING MERCURY AND HYDROQUINONE IN UGANDA

KAMPALA - Thursday, December 21, 2023

Uganda National Bureau of standards maintains the ban on cosmetics that contain mercury and hydroquinone in Uganda, in line with its mandate of protecting the public and environment against harmful and dangerous and sub-standard products.

A previous survey done by UNBS indicates that 31% of the samples brought from the market and tested in UNBS' internationally accredited laboratories were found to contain hydroquinone, contrary to the requirements of US EAS 377-2:2013 and most of these were imported products.

Some of the imported products were labelled as containing hydroquinone, though written as Benzene-1, 4-diol; 1, 4 hydroxy benzene; 1, 4-Benzenediol or Benzene-1, 4-Diol whereas others do not declare at all, which is harmful to unsuspecting clients.

The 32 brands tested and found to have Hydroquinone or Mercury or both include;

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION	BRAND NAME
Body Lotion	Nature Secrete Lightening Moisturizing Body Lotion with Carrot
Skin Lotion	B Light Extra Fort Lightening Body Milk with carrot Extracts
Skin Lotion	Clinic Clear whitening body Lotion
Skin Lotion	Nature Secrete Lightening Moisturizing Body Lotion with Carrot
Skin Lotion	Fair and White (F & W) Britening and clarifying Carrot
Skin Lotion	White Secret Lightening Body Lotion
Body Lotion	White Express – Carrotte
Body Lotion	Totem (Carotte+bave d'Escargot)
Body Lotion	Light Up Dark Spots Correcting
Body Lotion	Rapid Clair Super Éclair Assant
Body Lotion	B Light Extra Fort Lightening Body Milk with carrot Extracts
Body Lotion	White Secret
Body Lotion	Nature Secrete; Carotte



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Body Lotion	White Express – Eclaircissant Lait
Body Cream	Lemon Clear Clearing beauty cream treatment
Body Cream	Beauty Clinic whitening Body Cream (Skin repair and anti-aging)
Body Cream	Maxi Claire
Body Cream	Bio Perfect Light
Body Cream	White Secret
Body Cream	Beation
Body Cream	Miki Clair Plus
Body Cream	Totem
Body Cream	Bio Plus Carrot
Body Cream	Carolight
Body Cream	Cocopulp
Body Cream	Bio Plus Carrot
Body Lotion	Blight Extra fort
Body Cream	Totem (Carotte+bave d'Escargot)
Body Cream	Teint Clair
Body Cream	Rapid Clair Carotte
Body Cream	White Secrete
Body Cream	Light Up Dark Spots Correcting

A full list of banned cosmetics is available on the UNBS website.

Hydroquinone and Mercury are common active ingredients found in a number of skin care products, designed specifically to lighten or bleach the skin.

However, Research has established that hydroquinone is a carcinogenic or a cancer causing chemical and it has also been linked to the medical condition known as ochronosis in which the skin becomes dark and thick;



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The World Health Organization also states that Mercury, a key ingredient in most of the skin care products, causes Kidney damage, skin damage, rash and reduces the skins ability to resist bacterial and fungal infections. It adds that the other ingredient.

Cosmetics are governed by a number of compulsory Uganda Standards including Uganda standard (US EAS 377-1:2013, which states that there shall not be any hydroquinone or mercury in cosmetics to be used for skin applications and that only 2% hydroquinone is permissible for cosmetics to be used on hair.

In 2016, UNBS banned the manufacture, importation and sale of cosmetics that contain mercury and hydroquinone. The ban was effected after UNBS tested some cosmetics and were found to contain mercury exceeding the level permitted by the UNBS standards (US EAS 377-1:2013), while others contained potent ingredients like hydroquinone.

The sale of substandard products is an offence under Section 17 of the UNBS Act as amended 2013. Once found guilty, a first time offender is required to pay a minimum fine of one thousand currency points (which translates to UGX 20M) and not exceeding two thousand five hundred currency points (UGX 50M) or imprisonment for a period of not less than two years and not exceeding five years or both.

Besides Uganda, Hydroquinone has been banned in many other countries like Japan, the European Union and Australia.

UNBS would like to inform the public that cosmetics containing hydroquinone on the market have been smuggled into the country through various porous borders and are not cleared by UNBS.

UNBS also advises the public to be cautious when purchasing cosmetic products from the market. It is advisable to buy such products from reliable and reputable sources such as registered pharmacies or established retail stores and always look out for the expiry dates as well as the ingredients to ensure that there is no Mercury or Hydroquinone.

UNBS further encourages the public to report cases of substandard products on the market using our toll free line: 0800133133 or WhatsApp line 0713227580.

About UNBS



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The Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) is a Government Agency responsible for developing, promoting and enforcing of national standards in the protection of Public Health and Safety, and the Environment against harmful and sub-standard products.

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