**Imperial sees Duty-Free Cigarette Sales Recovery as Air Travel Returns**

LONDON – Imperial Brands said on Tuesday it was starting to see some recovery of sales of cigarettes in duty-free shops at airports and in popular European holiday destinations as COVID-19 restrictions ease and people begin to travel more.

Tobacco, alcohol and luxury goods makers were hit hard early on in the pandemic when travel was limited, depriving them of a key chunk of sales.

In its 2021 annual report, Imperial said travel recovery remained “difficult to predict due to varying COVID-19 restrictions across Europe”. Now, months later, the maker of Winston cigarettes and Backwoods cigars said it was seeing a recovery in the market.

“Our global duty-free business and our travel retail sales in the holiday destinations in Southern Europe have begun to recover as cross-border travel resumes,” the company said, adding that it had seen a similar recovery in the Middle East.

Globally, duty free sales accounted for roughly 2% of annual revenue prior to the pandemic, it said. Earlier on Tuesday it said it was on track to meet its 2022 goals helped by strong sales of e cigarettes and heated tobacco in Europe, driving its shares to a more than two-year high.

Major tobacco industry rival Philip Morris International also said in April that increased travel supported volume growth in Spain and duty-free stores around the world.