

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON

BENEFITS OF HOSTING THE 4TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE AFRICAN UNION AND THE 4TH MID-YEAR COORDINATION MEETING BETWEEN THE AFRICAN UNION, THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES AND THE REGIONAL MECHANISMS

Mr Speaker, on 1st July, 2022, you directed that it might be prudent to issue a ministerial statement on Zambia's benefits of hosting the 4th Mid-Year Co-ordinating Meeting of the African Union (AU), in conjunction with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the Regional Mechanisms (RMs), scheduled to take place in Lusaka from 14th to 17th July, 2022. This arose from the debate by the Member for Kantanshi, Hon Mumba.

Mr Speaker, on the same day, you also directed that we make comments on the issue arising from the Member of Parliament for Mporokoso, Hon. Mundubile's concern on the benefits of foreign travel by the Republican President.

Mr Speaker, in thanking you for this opportunity to present this statement to this august House, I wish to highlight, from the outset, the fact that the summit will be held in Lusaka this week, under the theme, "Building Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on the African Continent: Strengthen Agriculture, Accelerate the Human Capital and Social and Economic Development".

Mr Speaker, the House may wish to note that the Assembly of the AU held in January 2015, approved the offer by Zambia to host the 41st Session of the Executive Council and the 4th Mid-Year Co-ordination Summit. In June 2022, our Government signed a host agreement with the AU Commission to host this important event. In view of the on-going reforms in the AU, it was also agreed by the Assembly that the extraordinary sessions and one ordinary summit would be held annually, as the need arises.

Mr Speaker, in pointing out our groundwork to host this important meeting, I wish to report to the House and to the nation that all necessary preparations have been undertaken, and Zambia is prepared to welcome member states of the AU.

Sir, as you may be aware, President Hakainde Hichilema constituted a Ministerial Committee, which I am privileged to chair, deputised by my hon. Colleague, the hon. Minister of Tourism, for the purpose of co-ordination and preparation for this summit. The Committee has been working around the clock, closely with the AU Commission, to ensure that the preparations are on course and that all requirements and obligations, as a host country, are finalised and met.

Mr Speaker, on 31st May, 2022, President Hakainde Hichilema commissioned the newly built Kenneth Kaunda Wing at the Mulungushi International Conference Centre (MICC). The new conference facility has a sitting capacity of 2,500 delegates and is ready to host the summit.

Mr Speaker, it cannot go untold that Zambia is, indeed, ready to host a gathering of this magnitude. In this regard, it is absolutely critical that Zambia, as a country, takes advantage of this opportunity to promote its beauty, hospitality, tourism, cultural heritage, and the numerous trade and investment opportunities that come with the hosting of the summit.

Mr Speaker, I wish to inform the House also that the 4th Mid-Year Summit, which will be held on 17th July, 2022, is expected to be attended by thirteen Heads of State and governments of the member states, of which, five represent what we call the ‘Bureau of the Assembly of the Union’ and eight represent the ‘Regional Economic Communities (RECs)’. The 41st Session of the Executive Council is to be attended by fifty-one foreign ministers, including Zambia as a host, out of the fifty-five AU member states. As a host country, we are very honoured and grateful for the opportunity to host a summit of this magnitude.

Mr Speaker, the President of Zambia, as earlier mentioned, opened the newly built conferencing facilities and, therefore, his attendance to the summit is in regard to him being the host. The summit will, among other things, do the following:

- (a) deliberate and approve the budget for the AU Assembly for 2023 and also review implementation of previous decisions of the Executive Council and General Assembly;
- (b) discuss issues of co-ordination between the AU and RECs; and
- (c) receive updates and deliberate on some of the current topical issues that are affecting the African Continent, such as the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), climate change, and peace and security.

Mr Speaker, the AU Summit offers an opportunity for African leaders to align and harmonise continental development programmes in order to remove duplication of efforts between the AU and RECs. It also offers an opportunity to collaborate in resource mobilisation for continental programmes, including stemming of illicit financial flows out of the continent in order to accelerate the continental transformation agenda, as outlined in Agenda 2063. With this, there is no doubt that Zambia too shall benefit from the outcomes of the deliberations by advancing its own national interests.

Mr Speaker, another aspect of benefit of this event is that of the African leadership having an opportunity to exchange ideas on how to accelerate regional integration initiatives on the African Continent. For Zambia, as a land-linked country, participating at such a high-level forum and hosting such an event is a great opportunity to maximise on the benefits that would accrue from engagements that create the footing for socio-economic development.

Mr Speaker, hosting the summit will further promote Zambia's image as a peaceful, friendly and stable nation that is valued and upheld for its contribution to the enhancement of political, social and economic development in the region and the continent at large. Further, this high-level event will not only enhance Zambia's profile and stature, but will also trigger a sense of nationalism, patriotism, and promote unity and pride to all Zambians.

Mr Speaker, Zambia has a rare opportunity to showcase its hospitality and investment opportunities not only to the continent, but also to the global community. As Zambia hosts this event, it stands to establish networks and strategic partnerships that will facilitate the unlocking of tourism investments and business opportunities for Zambia and Zambians that would create a platform for sustained growth and development through increased tourism development as well as access to regional and international links.

Mr Speaker, the country forecasts a boost in tourism through the concept of Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE). Further, the summit will offer the private sector an opportunity to develop business linkages through the side events, thereby, contributing to economic growth. This is an important opportunity that will create a platform for business entities to meet potential partners, thereby, elevating their potential for increased trade and investment inflows that the country desperately needs.

Mr Speaker, the multiplier effect of hosting the summit will positively affect different sectors of our economy, ranging from the hospitality industry that was badly hit by COVID-19, agriculture sector, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), financial sector and tourism, to mention a few.

Mr Speaker, the House may be aware that the 34th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU adopted the continental Africa Water Investment Programme (AIP), whose expected result is to leverage about US\$30 billion worth of funding on water investments annually by 2030, and the subsequent creation of about 5 million jobs over the same period.

Mr Speaker, at this point, I wish to underscore that five countries from the five regional economic blocks of Africa were selected for piloting of the AIP, and Zambia was selected from the southern region, with the provision of US\$5.75 billion for water security investments and the creation of 200,000 formal jobs in Zambia by 2030.

Mr Speaker, I, therefore, wish to inform the House that on 16th July, 2022, President Hakainde Hichilema, will on the sidelines of the AU Mid-Year Coordination Summit, officially launch the

Zambia Water Investment Programme (ZIP) in order to leverage on this continental initiative. This too is beneficial to our country, given that water is a key enabler for economic drivers, such as agriculture, tourism and mining industries. Therefore, in noting that some hindrances to attaining our industrialisation and economic diversification agenda are due to a lack of access to adequate water, this initiative is urgently required.

Mr Speaker, this Government remains totally committed and confident that, with concerted efforts from all stakeholders, Zambia will successfully host the 4th African Union Mid-Year Coordinating Summit.

Mr Speaker, at this juncture, I wish to illustrate some of the benefits from the foreign trips undertaken by the President, Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, as raised by Hon. Mumba, Member of Parliament for Kantanshi.

Mr Speaker, all foreign trips by the President have been essential and in the spirit of implementing Zambia's Foreign Policy. In this regard, it is important to note that the Head of State plays a strategic role in the country's diplomacy. By virtue of him being the highest representative of Zambia on the global stage, he is expected to engage with other countries.

Mr Speaker, the President, amongst many other things, has a duty to enhance political and economic relations with Zambia's neighbours and the world over in order to advance and safeguard the country's national interests. He also has a duty to increase Zambia's influence on the international arena. So, the President's visits are strategic in nature and they raise the profile of the country. They are carefully selected to ensure impact and that they bring results inland.

Mr Speaker, I wish to point out also that Presidential trips equally help to secure bilateral and multilateral agreements in various sectors that the country needs such as trade, infrastructure development, finance and health. It is for these reasons that the Head of State will, from time to time, continue to undertake these engagements.

Mr Speaker, at this point, allow me to state that, from these foreign trips, the country has benefited the following;

- (a) renewed confidence and goodwill from the international community. This is important, looking at the last decade when Zambia defaulted on debt and when its human rights record was put in question;
- (b) mobilised pledges of resources from various international and multinational institutions to support the various sectors that have been cracking under a difficult economy;
- (c) undertaken negotiations by the President with the IMF and the World Bank to create a conducive environment for debt sustainability for our country, something that was delayed before;
- (d) the House may recall that Zambia was removed from the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Due to the President's international engagements, Zambia has been re-instated to the Millennium Challenge Compact, which was suspended in 2018 due to the poor governance of the previous Government;
- (e) the signing of the Green Growth Compact with the United Kingdom (UK), worth £1 billion, was signed because the President made an engagement with the British Government; and
- (f) renewed interest in investment opportunities in Zambia.

Mr Speaker, I now wish to underscore a few salient benefits from the trips that the President specifically made:

Official visit to the United States of America (USA) on the sidelines of the last United Nations General Assembly (UN-GA).

Mr Speaker, this engagement unlocked the following:

- (a) US\$18.5 million to support Zambia's fight against Covid-19 pandemic. At the time the President took office, the vaccination levels were only at 3 per cent. As we speak, we are averaging 30 per cent as a result of interventions such as this one;
- (b) US\$1 million was secured towards the electrification of rural health centres; and
- (c) US\$7.5 million was raised to support our ailing democracy. In order to restore our democracy and media freedoms, resources were required and the President put this on top of his agenda and these funds were raised.

Visit to the Twenty-Sixth Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, UK from 1st November to 3rd November, 2021

- (a) signing of the Green Growth Compact with the UK, worth £1 billion, out of which £100 million is reserved for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMES) that are critical to the economic recovery of our country. It is the small businesses that will resuscitate our ailing economy;
- (b) tapping into, among others, the new Global Environment Facility (GEF), which is a fund over US\$5.2 billion that is available to developing countries from 2022 to 2026. These funds are on a first-come-first-served basis. The President had to be amongst the first leaders to request for this funding; and
- (c) increased financing to the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) to which Zambia is eligible. We were able to get some funding from this;

The major outcome of the Visit that the President made to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to attend the World Expo 2020 in Dubai, from 18th to 22nd January, 2022, is as follows:

The Emirates Investment Authority (EIA), a fund which is worth US\$78 billion, has directed some of its members, the third-party investors, towards Zambia. The House may wish to know that as a result of this intervention, 2 GW of new facilities to generate electricity in this country will be installed through this intervention. This power is more than sufficient for mines and domestic use. Zambia will be able to use this power to export to the rest of Africa.

Visit to attend the Democratic Republic of Congo-Africa Business Forum (ABF) held in Kinshasa, from 24th to 25th December, 2021

Mr Speaker, this visit resulted into the subsequent aligning of the co-operation with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Coming out of this was the agreement between the two sister countries towards battery metals to ensure that Zambia is not lagging behind with the new boom in copper and that we form a consortium with the DRC's competitive advantage. Out of the top seven countries in Africa that have copper and cobalt, Zambia and the DRC are the leading top two.

Visit to Rwanda to attend the 26th Session of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings 2022 (CHOGM 2022) from 23rd to 25th June, 2022.

Mr Speaker, the outcome was that negotiations with creditors were expedited to create a conducive environment for debt sustainability for countries that attended that event. Engagements in CHOGM are essential to Zambia because it has been a long-standing partner of the Commonwealth. As a Government, we intend to ensure that we remain in the champion's league.

Mr Speaker, in concluding, allow me to reiterate that the President of this country remains firmly committed to ensuring that Zambia remains an active member of the AU, hence the hosting of

the summit. It will continue to remain a key partner in furthering peace, security and development for the entire continent.

Mr Speaker, the President also wishes to emphasise the importance of promoting Intra-African Trade and collaboration for the benefit of all Africans.

Mr Speaker, at this point, I wish to thank you for your kind indulgence.

Thank you, Sir.