

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON THE STATUS OF HUNTING CONCESSION AGREEMENTS

Madam Speaker, I am grateful for granting my ministry the opportunity to clarify the status of the hunting concession agreements through a ministerial statement.

The ministerial statement is as a result of a point of order raised by the Member of Parliament for Lumezi, Hon. Munir Zulu, MP, who wanted to find out the status of the purported cancelled hunting concessions by the Government, through the Ministry of Tourism.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Tourism and Arts then, through a tender, MTA/SP/001/20, advertised in the *Zambia Daily Mail* on 13th November, 2020, for the granting of safari and photographic tourism concessions in nineteen hunting blocks in various Game Management Areas (GMAs). The bids closed on 30th December, 2020, and on 9th March, 2021, the ministry announced, by public notice, the best evaluated bidders.

Madam Speaker, out of the nineteen hunting blocks tendered, ten prime hunting blocks were tendered and all were successfully bade for, except one where the Zambia Public Procurement Authority (ZPPA) ordered a re-evaluation. The remaining nine were either under-stocked or depleted. None was bade for, except Upper Luano, which was under contestation and the matter is still in court. The successful bidders were invited for negotiations between 7th and 14th April, 2021, after which parties signed the negotiation minutes.

On 13th April, 2021, the parties to the hunting concession agreement, that is, the successful bidders, the concerned Community Resource Boards (CRBs) and chiefs were invited to the Department Of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) offices, in Chilanga, to sign the negotiation minutes.

Madam Speaker, it is important to note that the invitation letters sent out to the successful bidders did not in any way constitute an invitation to sign a contract, but simply a bid acceptance and invitation to negotiations.

Further, it must be noted that at receiving the invitation letters, it was clearly marked by stating that, “the notice does not constitute an award of a contract to the bidder mentioned above. Bid acceptance and contract placement shall be in accordance with Part 10 of the public procurement regulations”.

Madam speaker, from the foregoing, I would like to state that the New Dawn Government has not cancelled any legally signed hunting concession agreements with any hunting outfitter. I will repeat that. From the foregoing, I would like to state that the New Dawn Government has not cancelled any legally signed hunting concession agreements with any hunting outfitter. The House may wish to note that 17th August, 2021, was a date set for the signing of the hunting concession agreements at the Ministry of Tourism’s headquarters. This was just days after the announcement of the results of the 12th August, 2021 General Elections, which ushered in the New Dawn Government, under the leadership of His Excellency the President, Mr Hakainde Hichilema.

Madam Speaker, the ministry proposed and agreed to defer the signing ceremony of the hunting concession agreements to give the New Dawn Administration sufficient time to review the process that followed before the parties could finally append their signatures on the hunting concession agreements. As such, no bidder paid the prescribed concession fees to the Government for the applied hunting blocks.

Madam, taking cognisance of the fact that the procurement process and or tender was initiated and guided by the provision of the Public Procurement Act No. 8 of 2021, and that all undertakings regarding the procurement process are subject to the provisions of the Public Procurement Act, a Ministerial Procurement Committee (MPC) was called upon on 29th April, 2022. The MPC meeting unanimously resolved to cancel the tendering process citing Section 69 of the Public Procurement Act No. 8 of 2020, which provides to the effect that:

“(1) A procuring entity may, at any time, prior to notification of contract award, terminate or cancel procurement proceedings without entering into a contract if –

- (a) the subject procurement is overtaken by –
 - (i) operation of law; or
 - (ii) substantial technological change;
- (b) the procurement need has ceased to exist or changed significantly;
- (c) funding is not sufficient for the procurement;
- (d) there is a significant change in the required technical details, bidding conditions, conditions of contract or other details, such that the recommencement of procurement proceedings is necessary;
- (e) there is evidence of collusion among bidders;
- (f) it is otherwise in the public interest;
- (g) there is evidence of corrupt practices by an office holder or any other person involved in the procurement;
- (h) bids were not received;
- (i) there is evidence that prices of the bids are above market prices;
- (j) material governance issues are detected;
- (k) all evaluated bids are non-responsive; or
- (l) there is an incidence of *force majeure*.

(2) A procuring entity that terminates or cancels procurement proceedings under this section shall, within fourteen days from the date of the termination or cancellation

- (a) submit to the Authority, a written report on the termination or cancellation stating the reasons for the termination or cancellation; and
- (b) notify, in writing, the person that submitted bids of the reasons for the termination or cancellation.

Madam Speaker, the MPC went ahead to notify the Zambia Public Procurement Authority (ZPPA) and the bidders in line on 4th May, 2022, within the rules and regulations of the Zambia Public Procurement Authority Act No. 8 of 2020.

Madam, the New Dawn Government was elected on a ticket of change in the August 2021 General Election. His Excellency, Mr Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia, has, on many occasions, pronounced the need for locals to participate in many of the business facets *via* joint ventures, be it local or foreign. The safari hunting business is one such lucrative business that requires participation of all entrepreneurial Zambians. The hasty signing of these hunting concession agreements by our previous Government would have meant the exclusion of many eligible Zambians from participating in this hunting business.

Madam Speaker, Zambia has twenty national parks and thirty-six GMAs. In the thirty-six GMAs, the ministry allocated twenty-nine safari hunting blocks between 2014 and 2020. You may wish to note that hunting is only permitted in designated GMAs and not in national parks.

Madam, further, six of the twenty-nine hunting concessions have expired. Four expired in March 2022, one in April 2022 and the other one in May 2022. In addition, the hunting concession agreement in Nkala Hunting Block was terminated on 22nd June, 2022, upon notice to terminate by the operator.

Madam Speaker, the remainder of the twenty-two commenced hunting at the opening of the hunting season on 1st May, 2022, contrary to media reports suggesting that there is no hunting taking place in Zambia. I will lay on the Table a list of all the hunting blocks which were operational, as of 1st May, 2022.

Madam, the House may wish to note that two of the twenty-two active hunting block concessions are domiciled in Lumezi Constituency. The House may also wish to note that there are three hunting blocks in Lumezi Constituency of which only Mwanya Hunting Block expired and is earmarked for retender.

Madam Speaker, to expedite the processes of retendering, the Ministry of Tourism has finalised the new bid document for the retender of hunting blocks in a phased-out approach. Priority will be given to the concessions that expired on 31st December, 2021. We encourage all the outfitters that bid for tender MTA/SP/001/20 to also retender as well.

Madam, as I conclude, may it be known that the hunting concession agreements have traditionally been a seven-year tenure for prime hunting blocks as opposed to the ten-year tenure that the previous regime had proposed in the cancelled tender process.

Madam Speaker, as I retreat to my seat, I wish to humbly request that hon. Members of Parliament and Community Resource Boards (CRBs) in the affected areas support and work with the Government in its endeavour to uplift the livelihoods of the communities. Making statements in the media that suggest that the Government is neglecting its people and encouraging poaching must not be encouraged as the Government is committed to developing Zambia in an all-inclusive manner. This is over and above the allocation of the K25.7 million Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in those constituencies, including Lumezi.

Madam, finally, the Ministry of Tourism, through the Department of National Parks and Wildlife, will be recruiting wildlife police officers later in the year to beef up law enforcement. Do look out for the advertisement. I further wish to invite hon. Members of Parliament and,

indeed, the general public living in the GMAs to volunteer as honorary wildlife police officers so that we embark on vigorous law enforcement.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.