

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON THE

TRAFFIC ACCIDENT ON NSAMA/NSUMBU ROAD IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE

Madam Speaker, kindly permit me to express my profound gratitude to you for allowing me this privilege and opportunity *albeit* with a heavy heart, to deliver this ministerial statement on the tragic road traffic accident that took away the precious lives of twenty-one of our beloved fellow citizens in the Northern Province.

Madam Speaker, I am the bearer of this most tragic and unfortunate national loss, all the more exacerbated by the fact that the all-female victims were mothers, wives, care-givers and, in most instances, breadwinners. Allow me, however, to draw solace from the fact that our dearly departed were devout believers in God Almighty, as evidenced by their membership to the Women's Christian Fellowship (WCF) of the United Church of Zambia (UCZ), returning from a church gathering whence they met their fate, may their souls rest in eternal peace.

Madam Speaker, hon. Members may recall that on Tuesday, 20th September, 2022, the Hon. Madam Speaker directed the hon. Minister of Transport and Logistics to issue a ministerial statement on this fatal road traffic accident and on the measures that were being taken to ensure that such accidents are avoided, especially when they involve the loss of lives of this magnitude. The directive followed a matter of urgent public importance raised by the hon. Member of Parliament for Lubansenshi Parliamentary Constituency on the need for the Government to assure the Zambian people of their safety when they were traversing the length and breadth of our great country.

Madam Speaker, for the record, the United Party for National Development (UPND) Government and my ministry will remain consistent and indefatigable in promoting the safety of our travelling public. The insinuation by the hon. Member who raised this matter of urgent public importance that I was cavalier in responding to this national tragedy is far from the truth. That is not what we do. However, this was owing to the fact that in spite of the Zambia Police Service rushing to the scene not only to ascertain the cause of the accident, but also to aid the

victims, I had also dispatched the Road Transport and Safety Agency (RTSA) for a more comprehensive status report.

Madam Speaker, on 19th September, 2022, at around 0100 hours, a road traffic crash occurred on Nsama/Nsumbu Road in Nsama District of the Northern Province involving a Mitsubishi Canter, which was ferrying congregants of the UCZ, the WCF. The congregants were returning from a special church gathering consistory conference, which was held at Munwa Village in Nsama District of the Northern Province.

Preliminary investigations, Madam Speaker, indicate that the driver lost control as he was descending the Chaushi Hill, a few kilometres before Nsumbu. Sadly, twenty-one passengers lost their lives; twenty on the spot, while one died in hospital and another twenty-nine sustained various injuries. The injured were admitted to Mpulungu and Mbala hospitals, whilst others with life-threatening injuries, thanks to the speedy intervention by the Ministry of Health and the Zambia Air Force (ZAF), were evacuated to the Lusaka University Teaching Hospital (UTH).

The cause of the accident is attributed, but not limited to three factors:

- (a) the canter was overloaded, as it carried a total of fifty people, each one of whom had luggage;
- (b) carrying people in a goods vehicle, which, as you may be aware, is against the road transport regulations; and
- (c) failure by the driver to take full control of the motor vehicle by way of failure to manage the curve, the weight *vis-a-vis* the speed at which the motor vehicle was moving.

Madam Speaker, sadly, on Wednesday, 21st September, 2022, yet another fatal road traffic accident occurred. This time around, it was on the Great East Road, at the airport traffic circle, in Lusaka. The accident happened when the driver of a Forden truck and trailer lost control as he

entered the traffic circle from the west and in the process hit into a Toyota Hilux that was stationary and waiting to join the traffic circle. Unfortunately, the driver of the Toyota Hilux died on the spot.

Madam Speaker, in March 2022, I stood before this august House and stated that human error was, by far, the biggest cause of these crashes. The aforementioned crashes are just, but two of many incidents. I cannot overemphasise how the behaviour of our drivers needs to change. It is my fervent hope that the recently enacted Road Traffic (Amendment) Act No. 8 of 2022 and the subsidiary regulations the Government is in the processing of introducing will modify the behaviour of our drivers.

Madam Speaker, the Government will continue implementing measures aimed at mitigating the rising incidents of road crashes and fatalities in order to ensure safety on our roads. It is evident, however, that there is a need to scale-up these interventions on our rural roads and in communities on the outskirts of major towns.

Madam Speaker, in order to mitigate rural road accidents, the Government will implement the following to improve rural road safety:

- (a) enhance community road safety sensitisation;
- (b) enhance motor vehicle testing in rural areas, through mobile motor vehicle examinations;
- (c) strengthen the system of driver training and testing in rural areas;
- (d) intensify road safety awareness campaigns in rural areas to sensitise the rural population on road safety; and

- (e) establish regional road safety committees to include traditional leaders and churches, among others, to facilitate structured engagement with rural communities.

Madam Speaker, with these interventions, we are optimistic that rural road crashes will be minimised.

Madam Speaker, as I conclude, allow me to reiterate that the Government alone cannot fight this scourge. It is also up to us, as individuals, you and I, to support the Government in its efforts to improve this country's road safety profile.

Madam Speaker, I wish to urge all road users to adhere to road traffic rules at all times and exercise patience on our roads to save lives. It is through safe road usage, safe vehicles, safe roads and driving at safe speeds that we can save lives.

I am sure I speak on behalf of you, Madam Speaker, and all hon. Members in this august House, in saying that our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims and their families and also wish those still recovering from their injuries a quick recovery and God's healing.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.