

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON

FINDINGS OF THE JOINT INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE OWNERSHIP OF THE FIFTY-ONE FLATS IN CHALALA TOWNSHIP THAT WERE SEIZED BY THE ANTI CORRUPTION COMMISSION (ACC)

BY

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, HON. KAMPYONGO, MP

Mr Speaker, I want to start by thanking you for the opportunity you have given the Ministry of Home Affairs on behalf of Cabinet to issue a ministerial statement on the findings of the joint investigations into the ownership of the fifty-one flats in Chalala Township that were seized by the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) and forfeited to the State in April of 2019.

Sir, my statement seeks to set the record straight by presenting the facts surrounding the investigations into the ownership of the fifty-one flats in Chalala Township of Lusaka. This is essential to allay the speculations, falsehoods and innuendos peddled against my Government and its innocent individuals and leaders by some interest groups, political parties and politicians that seek to tarnish the image of my Government.

My statement is, therefore, divided into three parts. In part one, I present the background to the investigations, seizure and forfeiture of the fifty-one flats in Chalala Township of Lusaka. In part two, I present the findings of the joint investigations team and steps taken to put the matter to rest while in part three, I draw some conclusions.

Background to the investigations, seizure and forfeiture of the fifty-one flats to the flats

Sir, as the hon. Members of this House might recall, the ACC informed the nation in June 2019 that a total number of forty-eight flats in Lusaka's Chalala area had been seized and forfeited to the State following failure by purported owners to claim ownership. The gazette notice was, therefore, signed in April 2019.

The ACC further informed the nation that the forfeiture process had been closed and that the properties hence forth belonged to the State.

Mr Speaker, a brief background to this case is that on 26th May, 2016, the ACC received a report of alleged possession of unexplained property against a Ministry of Finance official. He was reported to have acquired real estate in various residential areas of Lusaka among them Meanwood and Chalala areas. Following the report, the ACC commenced investigations into the matter to establish if, indeed, such high value properties existed.

Sir, investigations established that the suspect had bought 22 plots from a real estate agent who had been selling demarcated land to interested individuals on behalf of a client in whose name the parent title was registered at the Lands and Deeds Registry at the Ministry of Lands.

Mr Speaker, the plots in question are situated in Lusaka's Chalala area and are not registered in the Lands and Deeds Registry. Investigations also established that the Ministry of Finance official had paid for the said plots, but they were not registered in his name. On the contrary, the plots are registered in the name of a Copperbelt based lawyer. This is according to the records held by the real estate agency that sold the plots.

Investigations also established that the suspect had built a total number of fifty-one flats between 2012 and 2017. Thirty of the flats have been completed and are on rent. The rest of the flats or twenty-one of them were at 80 per cent completion and were, therefore, not occupied.

Mr Speaker, no records of approvals from the Lusaka City Council were found. However, there were applications pressed for water and power made in the names of the lawyer and the wife of the suspect.

Sir, it should be noted that the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) had interviewed a number of individuals connected to the flats, but none of them claimed ownership of the properties in question. The ACC undertook the forfeiture process by gazetting the notices in line with the Anti-Corruption Commission "Disposal of Recovered Property Regulations of 2004." During

this process, the properties remained unclaimed. They were consequently forfeited to the state in April 2019. Following the announcement of the forfeiture of the properties to the State, and non-identification of the owner of the flats by the ACC, there was a big public outcry. The members of the public wanted to know or have the owners of the properties identified. It was contended that the matter could not be put to rest, or finally concluded without identifying the owner of the properties.

Background of the joint investigations

Mr Speaker, let me now give the background of the joint investigations. To help put the matter to rest, or finally end the speculation, falsehoods and innuendos, His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu, directed my ministry to establish a joint investigations team to trace the owners of the properties in question. The joint investigations team consisted of the ACC, the Drug Enforcement Commission (DEC) and the Zambia Police Service. The team conducted further investigations and subsequently recorded warn and caution statements for concealment of properties believed to be proceeds of crime from the suspects. The suspects in this matter are two civil servants. Actually, it is a couple. With that “question,” the hon. Member should know them. A lawyer based in the Copperbelt Province is also a suspect.

Mr Speaker, with the identification of the suspected owners of the fifty-one flats, the investigations have been concluded. To that end, a docket has since been opened and sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for further action and guidance.

Sir, in conclusion, allow me to draw some conclusions regarding the investigations into the fifty-one houses in Chalala Township of Lusaka, and the public outcry that followed the announcement of the forfeiture to draw a line under this matter. Firstly, contrary to speculation and falsehoods that surrounded this matter, the flats were built between 2012 and 2014, and the first tenant occupied his flat in 2014. In May 2016, the investigations were started by the ACC on the basis of a tip-off by members of the public. The investigations further arose from a normal routine everyday work of the ACC. This fact proves the commitment of my Government to the fight against corruption, nepotism and other vices, including political corruption. The ACC was

not pushed by any individual or institution to investigate the matter, but followed up on a tip-off from members of the public, just as it does on other matters. Secondly, the case also clearly shows that my Government does not interfere in the work of the ACC or indeed any investigative wing. On the contrary, the investigative agencies are left to conduct their investigations freely and independently.

Sir, having concluded the investigations, the investigative wings remained ready to have the suspects tried in the court of law. I must take this opportunity to reaffirm my Government's commitment to the fight against corruption and all vices that are contrary to the principles of fairness, fair play, openness and transparency. To succeed, however, we must, at all times, avoid politicising the fight against corruption and other vices. Politicising the fight against corruption is counterproductive and unlikely to help the noble cause of transparency and accountability in our country. Corruption is real. It is found in both the public and private sector, and it is the duty of all citizens and people of goodwill to fight the scourge of corruption with everything under our disposal.

I thank you, Sir.