

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON THE

POSITION TAKEN BY THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT AT THE 11TH EMERGENCY SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY – PLENARY MEETING ON THE SITUATION IN UKRAINE

Madam Speaker, following speculation, a point of order that was raised in the House and your directive on the issue on how the Government of the Republic of Zambia voted at the United Nations (UN), I now wish to present to the House a statement clarifying these matters further.

Madam Speaker, the Republic of Zambia was amongst 141 countries that voted in favour of the UN resolution to demand the cessation of armed conflict in Ukraine, amongst other demands. It is important at this point that we put all matters in their perspective. In this case, I wish to refer to the issue of the ongoing unfortunate war in Ukraine and the decision by this Government to join the international community is supporting the UN resolution that occurred on 2nd March, 2022.

Madam Speaker, in a war situation, it is not always the best time to discuss ideological and geopolitical differences, or the alignment of one country either to the east or the west, or indeed whether Russia as a country had valid concerns regarding its decision to invade Ukraine.

Madam Speaker, on 2nd March, 2022, in a resolution entitled “Aggression Against Ukraine”, Zambia voted yes. I am sure that hon. Members of this House who have taken time to read in full the UN resolution will agree that the elements that were contained in this very important resolution are consistent with the UN Charter and with other conventions and protocols which member states, including Zambia, are party to. The adoption of the UN resolution was through a vote in which member states voted as follows: 141 members, including our country Zambia, supported the resolution; five member countries voted against it; and thirty-five abstained. The key issues that were agreed upon in this resolution include the following:

- (a) reaffirming commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and the territorial integrity of the country of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and extending to its territorial waters;
- (b) the demand for all parties concerned to allow for unhindered access to humanitarian assistance and the respect of human rights;
- (c) for demand for all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law to spare the civilian population and civilian objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population and also respecting and protecting humanitarian personnel and consignments used for humanitarian relief operations; and
- (d) urging for the immediate and peaceful resolution of the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine through political dialogue, negotiations, mediation and other peaceful means.

Madam Speaker, these highlighted matters in the resolution not only required the responsible and bold action by this Government of the Republic of Zambia and other member state of the General Assembly to show commitment in order to stop war which is primarily the purpose for which United Nations (UN) exists.

Madam Speaker, this commencement also demonstrated to the upholding of the UN Charter with all its principles under ideals for which this country has signed up to for many years.

Madam Speaker, it is therefore, of paramount importance to remember at this point that our obligation to ensure that the Charter of the United Nations and the promotions of the rule of law is always and always upheld. As hon. Members may wish to recall, from the time of our founding President, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, may his soul rest in peace. Zambia's foreign policy has been based on principles which respect the territorial integrity and political independence of any state on the globe and its boundaries. Further, Zambia has never supported war or the use of

force against any country. Zambia respects international humanitarian law that upholds the protection of civilians in an event of a humanitarian crisis. Therefore, when Zambia voted yes to the UN resolution, this is what Zambia agreed to.

Madam Speaker, allow me to emphasise at this point by referring to Article 2 of the United Nations Charter which obliges member states in their international relations to refrain from the threat or the use of force against the territorial integrity or the political independence of any state. Furthermore, it calls for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means the statement that was issued by our Ambassador accredited to the UN in New York, clearly made this point in full.

Madam Speaker, I wish to reiterate therefore, that this Government will continue to rely on the principles that have continued call for the cessation of hostilities around the world and also on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Like many other countries, we believe that there is still time for the parties involved all of them to arrive at a diplomatic solution; this is Zambia's preferred position.

Madam Speaker, there is no goodness in war, especially a war whose consequences will always be at a risk of the whole world being shaken. The world is already bearing the consequences of the humanitarian crisis that war is already causing including the need for various countries including Zambia to evacuate nationals out of Ukraine at huge expense. In our case, despite being geographically thousands of miles away of where the conflict is happening, we are already feeling the effects of this war in a number sector of our economy including the destabilisation of our local currency.

Madam Speaker, war breeds unbearable outcomes all the time including the loss of lives of innocent people, displacement of communities and families, it also worsens famine. In other region and resources that ordinarily should be used to help the weak in society channel towards expenses that have to do with war and the damage it leaves behind.

Madam speaker, I wish to conclude by emphasising to the House that the position taken by the Government of Zambia at the emergency special session of the UN General Assembly is consistent with Zambia's existing foreign policy. It is also in line with Zambia's national interest and most importantly in accordance with the UN Charter to which we are a signatory.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.