

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON THE
THE BENEFITS OF VISITS UNDERTAKEN BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT
MR EDGAR CHAGWA LUNGU
BY THE HON. MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MR KALABA

Mr Speaker, I sincerely thank you for giving me an opportunity to appraise the House on a litany of issues that have been happening in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Sir, I have on previous occasions, in this august House taken to the Floor to state that the growing interdependence of countries on the continent and indeed the world as a whole necessitates the need for high level representation at regional, bilateral, multilateral meeting and engagement, if Zambia is to remain relevant on the international stage.

Mr Speaker, the visits undertaken by His Excellency the President in this regard symbolize a major shift of how Zambia is leveraging her geographical position as well as strategic international relations in order to promote bilateral and multilateral cooperation as well as enhance inter and intra-regional trade under the spirit of south to south cooperation. The benefits of in-bound and out-bound visits by His Excellency the President and Foreign Heads of State, respectively, can be immediate or long term and bring both tangible and intangible results.

Sir, the invitations extended to His Excellency the President by his counterparts takes cognisance of our country's contribution to shaping the socio-economic development agenda of the region and the continent as well as our active involvement in peace, security and reconstruction efforts on the continent.

Mr Speaker, as this House is aware, at the August 2017, 37th Southern African Development Community (SADC) Ordinary Summit, Zambia was unanimously elected as one of the three Members of the Organ Troika on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation. This is the principle arm of SADC that is charged with the responsibility of maintaining and consolidating peace, security and political stability in the region.

In this regard, Zambia as incoming Chair of the SADC Organ Troika, was represented at the Double Troika Summit which agreed to put in place measures that would support the Kingdom of Lesotho to strengthen peace and security, to assist with the implementation of constitutional, public and security sector reforms and also to monitor and ensure that rule of law is complied with. The Double Troika Summit also identified areas of priority to be implemented urgently through a SADC-managed Oversight Mechanism and also to reinforce SADC's early warning mechanism in the event of signs of any instability in the Mountain Kingdom.

His Excellency, President Lungu, undertook to hold closed door discussions with the Chairperson of SADC, His Excellency President Jacob G. Zuma after the Double Troika Summit, in order to obtain a comprehensive overview of the political and security situation not only in the Kingdom of Lesotho, but also in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which remains on the agenda of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.

Zambia's long standing belief is that peace for Zambia alone, without stability in the region, would not be in the interest of the country as we seek to be land linked to economies that will facilitate trade, investment and growth for our country.

Mr Speaker, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Zambia also travelled to New York from 18th to 22nd September, 2017 to participate in the High-Level General Debate of the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) that was held under the theme "Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet".

Sir, the session presented an opportunity for Zambia to contribute to the discussions to find lasting solutions that can address global challenges as well as protect and advance the country's national interests. Accordingly, His Excellency the President addressed the UNGA where he pressed Africa's case for the reform of the UN. He singled out the UN Security Council as a body that needed to be reformed in order to be more representative of all countries.

Mr Speaker, in addition, His Excellency the President chaired a high-level side event on Ending Child Marriage in his capacity as the continental Champion for ending Child Marriage in Africa.

The Event was organised by the Zambian Government in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN-Women and the African Union Commission. The international community renewed its commitment and accelerated its efforts to end child, early and forced marriages by 2030.

Sir, His Excellency President Lungu also participated in a number of other high level meetings and held bilateral meetings on the margins of UNGA to discuss peace and security as well as other developmental matters of interest to Zambia.

Mr Speaker, in advancing Zambia's regional and bilateral relations, His Excellency the President joined twenty other Heads of State and Government to attend the inauguration of His Excellency President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço of the Republic of Angola, on 26th September, 2017. The attendance of the inauguration celebrations of neighbouring countries by the Head of State is cardinal for the enhancement of bilateral relations as they give the head of state an opportunity to show solidarity to his counterparts and promote the spirit of unity in the region.

Sir, in that regard, Angola is a key and important economic partner for Zambia and our two countries share long standing relations. Furthermore, both countries are members of the *Southern African Development Community* (SADC) Organ Troika on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation and as such, it was of benefit to our membership to the Organ Troika that His Excellency the President participated in the inauguration ceremony of his newly elected counterpart.

Mr Speaker, in addition, the visit to Angola presented an opportunity for the two Heads of State to review the relations between Zambia and Angola. Their Excellencies discussed regional, continental and international issues of mutual interest, particularly, peace, security, stability and sustainable development of the SADC region.

Sir, in further enhancing relations with another key neighbouring country, Botswana, His Excellency the President attend that country's 51st Independence Anniversary from 29th to 30th September, 2017.

Mr Speaker, Zambia and Botswana share strong bilateral relations that have transcended change in political leadership in both countries based on close historical ties as well as interaction between the peoples of both countries. Enhanced bilateral relations are necessary for the successful implementation of joint projects such as the Kazungula Bridge Project and other areas of mutual interest.

Sir, in addition, the two countries maintain close cooperation through a number of regional and international organisations in which they share common membership such as SADC, the AU, the Commonwealth and the United Nations.

Mr Speaker, I wish to emphasise that it is only by interaction with the international community, at all levels, that Zambia can meet its foreign policy objectives which seek to advance its national interests.

Sir, Zambia will continue to engage and political and economic interaction within the region and the world at large in order to drive the development process of our country through diplomacy. Furthermore, as the principle custodian of Zambia's diplomacy, my ministry will ensure that the Head of State of the Republic of Zambia, His Excellency Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu, continues to undertake strategic visits as well as host his counterparts in our unending quest to pursue and safeguard the country's national interests as prescribed in the 7th National development Plan.

Sir, His Excellency the President has demonstrated his unwavering commitment to the attainment of Zambia's development aspirations, which include improved health, good education and improved service provision for our people, overall growth of the country's economy and the maintenance of peace and security in the region.

Mr Speaker, allow me, therefore, to end by calling on Members of this August House to support His Excellency the President achieve our aspirations as a nation as he pursues the economic diplomacy we have crafted for ourselves.

Sir, we are only as strong as we united and as weak as we are divided. Let us rally around a common purpose as we aspire for deep sense of patriotism because patriotism knows no political party. We need to bridge the political divide and put Zambia first.

I thank you, Sir.