

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON THE
FIRE AT COMESA AND BUTEKO MARKET
BY THE HON. MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, MR MWALE

Mr Speaker, I wish to thank you most sincerely for allowing me to render this ministerial statement at such short notice. It is with a heavy heart great sadness that I stand here to inform the House, and through it the nation, about the sad events of last night where the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA) Market was gutted by fire barely some hours after Buteko Market in Mufulira on the Copperbelt was also gutted.

Mr Speaker, primary investigations have revealed that the fire at COMESA Market started around 1930 hours. The cause is still unknown. The Lusaka City Fire Brigade was informed around 2030 hours, who in turn mobilised other fire brigades including the Zambia Air Force (ZAF) and National Airports Corporation (NAC) for reinforcement. Initially, the number of fire tenders was adequate, but the challenge was accessibility to the source of the fire and the distance from the scene to the fire hydrants for recharge purposes. Consequently, the Zambia National Service (ZNS) and Lusaka Water and Sewerage Company (LWSC) were engaged to provide equipment to create access and to reactivate the fire hydrants near the scene respectively, which they all did.

Mr Speaker, I wish to inform the House that it is very unfortunate that there was one casualty, a Tanzanian national by the name of Mama Kishala, may her soul rest in peace. The COMESA Market accommodates a total of 1,500 stalls with about 2,500 traders every day. A number of property and goods worth millions of Kwacha have been lost and whose value will be established and made known once the investigations are concluded, although indications show that more than 80 per cent of the stalls were affected.

Mr Speaker, the fire at Buteko Market in Mufulira started at 0100 hours and was contained by 0700 hours by fire fighters from Mufulira Municipal Council and Mopani Copper Mines. The cause of the fire is yet to be established.

Mr Speaker, for now, I wish to call upon all affected traders and the general public to remain calm as the Government, through the Ministry of Home Affairs and other investigative wings, concludes investigations.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.