

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ISSUES SURROUNDING ZAFFICO

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS, MR KAMPYONGO

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity given to the Ministry of Home Affairs to deliver a ministerial statement on the riots that took place in Kitwe on Monday, 5th November, 2018.

Sir, allow me to also thank the hon. Member of Parliament for Mazabuka Central Constituency, Mr Garry Nkombo, who rose on a point of order on Tuesday, 6th November, 2018, seeking a statement on this unfortunate incidence. The Hon. Member of Parliament for Chama South Parliamentary Constituency, Mr Davison Mung'andu equally raised a point of order on Wednesday, 7th November, 2018. Mr Speaker, you ordered that we combine the responses to these two points of order through the ministerial statement, which I am about to do.

Mr Speaker, before I go into the details and events of the riots, I would like to just set the record straight as regards the issues surrounding the Zambia Forestry and Forests Industries Corporation Limited (Zaffico).

Mr Speaker, hon. Members will recall that in his previous address to the House, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu, directed that all state owned enterprises should ultimately be listed on the Lusaka Stock Exchange (LUSE) with the view to improve their performance and governance and give Zambians an opportunity to own shares in these companies.

Mr Speaker, hon. Members of the House will also recall that during the hon. Minister of Finance's 2019 Budget address, she announced to the House and to the nation that as part of the transformation agenda, the state owned enterprises, the Industrial Development Corporation,

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(IDC) would, among other interventions be listing state owned enterprises such as Zaffico on the LUSE.

Mr Speaker, the Government has been very consistent and clear on what it intends to do with Zaffico and other state owned enterprises. Sir, to respond to the concerns of the hon. Members of this august House and, indeed, the nation at large, I shall present the facts and sequence of events that culminated into the riots in the Kitwe townships with large numbers of households that depend on the forestry industry for their livelihoods.

Facts and sequence of events surrounding the riots witnessed in Kitwe are as follows:

On Friday 2nd November, 2018, the President of the United Party for national Development (UPND), Mr Hakainde Hichilema during a radio interview on Sun Radio Station of Ndola made a number of slanderous and untruthful statements against the Government including a statement to the effect that the Government of Zambia had sold Zambia Forestry and Forestry Industries Corporation Limited (Zaffico) to the Chinese. In his own words the UPND President said and I quote:

“Ifya Zaffico nomba, filyafine bashitishe Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), nabashitisha Zaffico nombaline tulelanda nabashitisha Zaffico kuma Chinese. Twakana mukwai. We are going to reverse those decisions when we come in.”

In English, this statement says, with regard to Zaffico, just like they sold ZNBC, they have sold Zaffico to the Chinese as we talk.

On Saturday, 3rd November, 2018, the Zambia National Association of Millers notified Mindolo Police Station of the intention to hold a public process on the 10th November, 2018 to petition or oppose the purported sell of Zaffico to the Chinese by the Government. However, on Monday, 5th November, 2018, the saw millers assembled in Buchi, Chimwemwe, Kawama and Race Course townships in Kitwe and staged illegal protests which involved blocking of roads,

burning of used motor vehicle tyres on the roads, harassing motorists and in some instances even stoning the motor vehicles that were passing by.

Sir, the illegal protest culminated in riotous behaviour including looting of some Chinese owned enterprises in Race Course and Chimwemwe townships for example, the rioters looted businesses owned by Chinese nationals. The premises of Ling Sung Copper Smelter in Race Course for example, were equally attacked. The gate to the premises was damaged and rioters forced their way into the premises with a view to looting anything of value.

Mr Speaker, to stop the looting, an armed security guard fired warning shots in the air. The rioters however ignored warning shots and pressed on. As they entered the premises the security guard on duty was forced to fire at the rioters resulting in one of the rioters or looters identified as Victor Chanda aged 28 years of Race Course Compound being injured in the face.

Sir, to restore order in the affected townships in Kitwe, the Zambia Police Service sent officers sent officers to stop the riots and looting. The police operations resulted in the apprehension of 102 suspected rioters. Of these, eighty were males while twenty-two were females. The rioters are detained at various police stations in Kitwe while investigations are still active.

Mr Speaker, the riots and looting of Chinese owned enterprises in Kitwe were a result of misinformation and spreading of false information to the effect that the Government had sold Zaffico to the Chinese who were also accused of buying all the land at the expense of the Zambians by the President of the UPND and other people who spread the false information through social media platforms and radio broadcasts already alluded to. The other people who spread the false information through social media platforms are yet to be identified as the investigations, as I have stated, are still going on.

Sir, falsehood and misinformation have the potential to divide our young nation beyond repair and throw it into chaos.

Hon. Members of this august House are aware that spreading of false information is a criminal offence. Section 67 of Cap 87 of the laws of Zambia, criminalises any act of publishing false news whether orally or in writing or any statement, rumour or report which is likely to cause fear and alarm to the public or to disturb public peace. Further, Section 70 of the same Act prohibits any person from expressing or showing hatred, ridicule or contempt for reasons on the basis of their race, tribe and place of origin or colour. In that regard, it must never be forgotten that Zambia has been a giant in the fight against racial discrimination and colonialism. Our gallant freedom fighters fought racial discrimination in this very country, in the region and the world. We cannot therefore, condone racism and discrimination against persons or group of people from anybody in this country.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, while Zambia largely remains peaceful, it has been under incessant attacks through the spread of false information for some time now. The misinformation and slander campaign has the potential to disrupt peace and security and send out country into chaos like I have stated earlier. The irresponsible misinformation and hate campaign against the leadership of our country, the xenophobic attacks against the people and Government of China must equally come to an end. China as we know, like the Her Honour the Vice-President stated, has since our independence proved its sincerity and friendship. We must build on the good relationship and get our country to higher level of economic development.

Sir, today, the People's Republic of China which is being singled out in the senseless attacks and campaign has the second largest economy in the world. All the countries in world including countries and regions with big economies such as the United States of America, Japan, the European Union and closer to home, South Africa, to mention a few, are seeking means and ways of benefiting from China the fastest growing and largest developing economy in the world. Zambia therefore, cannot be an exemption. We must engage with China for the benefit of both our peoples and Governments on mutual basis.

Mr Speaker, my Government shall continue to promote peace and security for all who choose to live and work in Zambia without any discrimination. Machinations aimed at bringing the

Government down through falsehoods and criminal activities are bound to fail and must therefore, come to an end.

Similarly, the shameful anti-China or Chinese campaign must equally come to an end because there is no reason for hatred against the People's Republic of China and its nationals. China has been and remains Zambia's all weather friend. Where criminality will be recorded, it shall be dealt with in accordance with the laws provided.

Sir, despite the sustained campaign to cause chaos by the enemies of our country, Zambia remains generally peaceful and law enforcement agencies remain ready to deal with any eventualities arising from the legal activities of those who are desperate, be it politicians, or any criminal elements bent on fomenting chaos in Zambia. Our country needs peace, rule of law and order to continue attracting investments for employment and wealth creation. Wealth cannot be created without capital. Those who are bringing capital into our country should not be discouraged by misinformation and misguided attacks.

Mr Speaker, the Government will not tolerate any individual or organisation spreading falsehoods or misinformation. Let me sternly warn all those in the habit of spreading false misinformation that the long arm of the law shall catch up with them.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.