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Republic of Zambia

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
ON THE IMPACT OF XENOPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN
SOUTH AFRICA ON ZAMBIANS AND CITIZENS OF THE
SADC REGION LIVING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
LUSAKA

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Mr. Speaker,

Following the directive by Her Honour the Vice-President, allow me to brief the House on the impact of xenophobic violence in South Africa on Zambians and citizens of the SADC Region living in South Africa.

Mr. Speaker,

The House may recall that in April, 2015 there was an escalation of xenophobic violence, which started in KwaZulu-Natal Province and eventually spread to Gauteng Province.

Mr. Speaker,

Since the end of apartheid and the ushering in of a multiparty democratic system of government in 1994, in South Africa, migrants from all over the world, especially African countries, migrated to many cities and towns in South Africa in search of economic prospects. This movement of people in large numbers exerted pressure on various communities leading to the resentment of foreigners by some South Africans.

It should be noted that various reasons for xenophobia in South Africa have been advanced, such as; the competitive contest for scarce resources, the violent past and what it left unresolved, inadequate service delivery and the influence of micro politics in

township. In addition to this, some groupings of South African nationals have not accepted the presence of refugees, asylum-seekers and foreigners in their communities, which has reinforced resentment of foreigners particularly of African origin, by the locals.

Mr. Speaker,

In an effort to protect Zambians from xenophobic attacks, the Zambian High Commission in Pretoria was instructed to advise all Zambians living in South Africa to be cautious and avoid areas which were reported or perceived to be affected by xenophobic attacks.

The Zambian Government, in this regard, issued a series of Press Releases in a bid to reassure the public that the welfare of Zambian nationals living in, and travelling to the Republic of South Africa remained a top priority.

Furthermore, **Mr. Speaker, during** the period of xenophobic violence, staff from the Mission were deployed to Durban to assess the situation and render possible support to the Zambian nationals.

Similarly, Zambians travelling to South Africa, particularly cross border traders, were strongly advised to ensure personal security when travelling to and staying in, the Republic of South Africa.

As a result of the measures which were taken by the Zambian Government, I am pleased to report to this August House that there

were no reports of any known Zambian nationals living in South Africa that had been victims of the unfortunate attacks.

In addition, His Excellency President Edgar Chagwa Lungu, continued to consult with His Excellency, President Robert G. Mugabe, in his capacity as the Chairperson of SADC and the leadership of the Government of the Republic of South Africa on possible practical measures to arrest the violence.

Following the concerns raised by the SADC region, the South African Government launched a successful anti-crime campaign, "Operation Fiela", which focused on drug and human trafficking, hijacking, illegal firearms and other serious crimes. The South African police, supported by the army, had since recovered illegal firearms, rescued children who had been victims of trafficking and destroyed drug making dens. The operation has a monitoring mechanism, which provides for periodical review and assessment of factors likely to cause xenophobic violence.

Mr. Speaker,

The xenophobic violence continues to be a matter of grave concern not only to the SADC region, but the entire continent. In this regard, His Excellency Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South

Africa, reported to the African Union Heads of State and Government Summit, which was held in Johannesburg in June, 2015, on his government's response to the xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals. President Zuma stressed that his country took its obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights seriously and as a signatory to various international Conventions on Human rights, including the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, was committed to promoting and protecting the human rights of foreigners. He pointed out that the South Africa's Constitution protected the rights of all people living within the country, both South Africans and foreign nationals alike. He stated that the various actions including peace marches and media campaigns were intended to promote peaceful co-existence and tolerance and help to dispel the stereotype that South Africans were against fellow Africans or were xenophobic. Further, President Zuma urged his fellow African leaders to work together within the African Union to respond to the challenge of migration as well as work towards the realization of the Agenda 2063, which is the African Union development agenda, in their collective efforts towards a better and integrated Africa.

Mr Speaker,

As a result of these interventions, I wish to report that the Zambian nationals have continued to travel to South Africa and those living in

that country have also continued with their normal lives. We expect, however, that they will observe the Zambian Government's counsel not to patronize violent-prone areas. As for the SADC citizens, many survivors of xenophobia have since returned to their respective countries. Those who were displaced within South Africa, have since reintegrated in the various communities. SADC, as a community, has since welcomed the measures that the relevant authorities in South Africa have taken in order to prevent the recurrence of xenophobic violence.

Mr Speaker,

I wish to conclude by stating that Zambia and South Africa enjoy warm historical ties that have translated into strong economic, social and cultural relations between the two countries. We should, therefore, continue to capitalise on these relations in our efforts to promote trade, tourism and investment between the two countries.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you!