

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON THE
**THE STATE VISIT TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
CHINA BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA, MR.
HAKAINDEHICHELEMA**

BY THE
**THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL CO-
OPERATION (MR KAKUBO), MP**

Madam Speaker, it is indeed a privilege and honour for me to take the Floor and address the House on the recent State visit by our Republican President, Mr Hakainde Hichilema to the People's Republic of China which took place from 10th to 16th September, 2023.

Madam Speaker, this follows an invitation from President Xi Jinping to President Mr. Hakainde Hichilema.

Madam Speaker, the President was accompanied by the First Lady, Mrs Mutinta Hichilema and a selected number of Hon. Ministers. The state visit Programme covered engagements in five cities, namely, Shenzhen, Jingangshan, Ningde, Fuzhou and of course the capital city Beijing.

Madam Speaker, this was a carefully organised state visit aimed to offer a glimpse of China unique development approach and explore opportunities that would benefit Zambia as well.

In this regard, Madam Speaker in this regard, the President held fruitful bilateral talks with his counterpart President Xi Jinping as well as meetings with the Premier of China and also the Chairman of the Standing Committee for the National People's Congress and the Leaderships of Shenzhen City, Fujion and Jiongxi Provinces.

Madam Speaker, in addition, the Republican President held meetings with captains of industry during company engagements in the areas of mining, railway transport, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), logistics, and also electric vehicle sub sector.

Madam Speaker, under the credible Leadership of the President, Zambia has continued on the strong historical relations and also on the all weather friendship shared between the People's Republic of China since the days of the founding Fathers of our two countries Dr. Kenneth Kaunda and also Chairman Mao Zedong. The enduring exceptional relations between the two nations have been constantly being reaffirmed at multi junctures cross various levels in our engagements including, Madam Speaker, a high level telephone conversation that occurred between President Hichilema and his counterpart President Xi Jinping in May 2022, as well as during the China Africa high level round table dialogue that was held on the margins of the Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) Summit in South Africa in September, 2023.

Madam Speaker, during these very important exchanges, the two leaders reiterated the robust bilateral ties and expressed their mutual intent to further upgrade the level cooperation between Zambia and the People's Republic of China.

Madam Speaker, I must emphasis at this point that contrary to the claims that have been made by certain quarters, Zambia and China relations have never ever grown cold. In President Xi Jinping's own publicly available affirmation last year which I wish to quote:

“China, Zambia relations have maintained a positive momentum of development with the two way trade volume hitting a record high and Zambia becoming the country attracting the most Chinese direct investment in the whole of Africa.”

Madam Speaker, in fact, I am delighted to convey to this esteemed House that during the state visit President Xi Jinping and president Hichilema took significant steps in elevating these relations of our two countries to the level of the distinguished statues

of the comprehensive strategic and cooperative partnership. This has never been done before.

Madam Speaker, to us, this is a milestone that signifies a deepening of bilateral relations that are closely aligned with the respective national priorities for both Zambia and China.

Madam Speaker, endeavour, we are not cheering down, but building upon the solid foundation that have already been led by our founding fathers.

Madam Speaker, may I now highlight some of the key outcomes of this historic visit. At this point I will be slightly slow for emphasis:

Revitalisation of the Tanzania Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA) and Mulungushi Textiles

Madam Speaker, we want to confirm that China has committed to upgrade and renovate TAZARA aligning with market and commercial principles.

Madam Speaker, to confirm this, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) granting the protection and the management of this critical infrastructure was also signed during this state visit.

Madam Speaker, further, China pledged to encourage its own established businesses to redevelop and invest in Mulungushi Textiles with modern and efficient technology which will not only facilitate value added export to markets like China itself, but also stand as a formable driver for job creation in our own country.

Madam Speaker, the relevant authorities from both China and Zambia will continue discussions on these two critical matters of economical importance to us.

Zambia's Debt Restructuring

Madam Speaker, we all know the history of our debt and of course, how at some point in our recent history there was recklessness in borrowing and expenditure.

Madam Speaker, as the House knows, completion of discussions on Zambia's debt restructuring process is the main foundation required for Zambia's economic revival. In this regard, our hon. Minister of Finance and National Planning and his Chinese counterpart had detailed discussions on debt during the state visit.

Madam Speaker, this was as a result of country attaining under the stewardship of President Hichilema, the land mark agreement on the debt restructuring under the G20 framework.

Investment

Through the proactive investment promotion activities that took place during this state visit, on this part I will be even slower Madam Speaker. The following injection of investment into our economy has already started taking place.

Madam Speaker, the Chinese giant mining company, China Nonferrous Metal Company (CNMC) unveiled an ambitious plan to invest an additional US\$1.3 billion, Madam Speaker, for the avoidance of doubt, to anyone who is listening, US\$1.3 billion is a fresh direct cash injection into the Zambian economy, particularly, in the mining sector. For emphasis' sake, this investment means the following; UD\$600 million will be for the reopening of new shafts at Luanshya Copper Mine (LCM).

Madam Speaker, US\$400 million is aimed at increasing production to 110,000 tonnes per year, at Chambishi Copper Mine (CCM), which is operated by a CNMC subsidiary, Non Ferrous Corporation Africa (NFCA) Plc.

Madam Speaker, US\$200 million is going to be used for the support of its subsidiary Sino-Metals for operations and expansion. The CNMC has also committed to invest in new warehousing facilities and establish, on the social part, a major vocational school, in Zambia.

Madam Speaker, I am not done. Further, a total of US\$1.45 billion has also been indicated as investment coming in by other Chinese investors, in the following manner; US\$800 million is for investment in a 1,200MW wind and solar plant. This is meant to manage the risk of hydropower, as espoused already in the earlier ministerial statement by the Minister of Green Economy and Environment.

Madam Speaker, US\$290 is also envisaged to be invested in car battery–

I will repeat that.

Madam Speaker, US\$290 million was pledged for investment in car battery production. A further, US\$450 million was pledged for investment in solar generation, for another plant with a capacity of 500 MW.

Madam Speaker, additionally, a commitment to invest US\$715 million to create an industrial park with facilities for the manufacturing of steel and solar energy production, among others

Madam Speaker, China also pledged to support Zambia's development and upgrade our existing economic zones into industrial supply chain and cooperation zones.

Madam Speaker, on the part of agriculture, we all know that agriculture is the main source of income and employment for over 70 per cent of our population living in rural areas. Therefore, efforts were made in this sector and the Chinese Government agreed to partner with the Zambian Government in the construction of dams in at least four provinces. This will lead to the country enhancing its irrigation capacity. Consequently, the two Governments have jointly agreed to invest in the mass production of crops, not just for local use, but also for export to our region and to meet the demand in China.

Madam Speaker, on trade, both Governments agreed to increase trade. Therefore, China has pledged to provide even bigger market access for Zambian products and provide facilitation for holding trade events, specifically for Zambia, in China.

Madam Speaker, in other areas of cooperation, the two heads of Heads of State decided for our two countries to enhance cooperation in areas of culture, tourism, education, public health, media and sports.

Madam Speaker, this is also important for our economy, the House may also wish to know that an agreement between the two Heads of State was reached for the commencement of direct freights between Zambia and China.

Madam Speaker, this will not only facilitate the implementation of the outcomes that I have mentioned already, by will also increase tourism. We expect to have more Chinese tourists in our country and serve towards the creation of Lusaka as a major connectivity hub for freights.

Madam Speaker, President Hichilema's leadership credentials continue to be acknowledged. In this regard, President Xi Jinping congratulated his brother, President Hichilema and offered him support for being the Chairperson of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and for being the Chairperson for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ on Defence, Politics and Security.

Madam Speaker, during this State Visit, there were a number of strategic bilateral Memorandum of Standing (MOUs) that were signed and designed to give structure and processes to the issues that I have already highlighted. Some of the MOUs include an MOU infrastructure. China has decided that as early as December this year, the process to set up a manufacturing plant for prefabricated housing will start. Specialized technology will start coming into the country as early as December this year. The MOUs also included an agreement on digital economy, tourism, and mining, just to mention a few.

Madam Speaker, during the State Visit, the President visited a poverty reduction village, which can be compared or paralleled to the New Dawn Government's enhanced countrywide Constituency Development Fund (CDF) programme for rural transformation. Inspiration was drawn by the Government to transform our villages into towns and cities that have access to all necessary amenities.

Madam Speaker, Zambia and China's bilateral relations have undoubtedly traversed a significant journey. Further, in the year 2024, Zambia and China are set to jointly celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries. In this vein, during the State Visit, our Heads of State engaged in a substantive discussion and forged a pivotal agreement. They collectively designated the forthcoming year, 2024, as a dual commemoration, a year of business cooperation and a year of culture and tourism cooperation. This will undoubtedly strengthen the already deep-rooted friendship between our two countries.

Madam Speaker, allow me at this point to also highlight that, contrary to the information that was peddled on social media, we want to state that President Hichilema's State Visit was a result of meticulous planning for several months between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Zambia and our counterpart ministry in China. The depth of collaboration has been vividly highlighted in the quality of the visit that happened just a few weeks ago.

Madam Speaker, we knew the entire programme including the date of the State Visit several months ago, but both Governments agreed to keep the date classified.

This programme, Madam Speaker, was carefully curated with a strategic objective of aligning Zambia's core interests in China, and China's core interests in Zambia. Also, to ensure alignment, collaboration, and a process flow and legal framework around the matters that would most benefit our country. It was also the primary aim of the state visit to deliver tangible benefits as opposed to what used to happen before where it was possible for certain people to travel with musicians, book boats and have a social life on the side-lines of business.

Madam Speaker, President Hichilema's historic journey effectively redefined Zambia's long standing relationship with China. It reaffirmed what we already know as the deep-seated political commitment of President Xi Jinping towards this Administration, and of course, it underscores the unwavering dedication to nurturing cooperation between our two countries.

Once, again, Madam Speaker, I just want to end by saying that Mr Hakainde Hichilema, the President of Zambia, has definitely delivered practical results from this state visit.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.
