

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

BY THE

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND ACTING LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS IN THE HOUSE (MR LUFUMA), MP

ON THE STATEMENT BY THE ZAMMSA CHAIRPERSON IN THE NEWS REGARDING THE SHORTAGE OF MEDICINES

Madam Speaker, I thank you for according me this opportunity to respond to the matter of urgent public regarding the statement which was gracing the front page of the *Daily Nation* newspaper on Tuesday, 13th June, 2023. The matter of urgent public importance was raised by Hon. Mutotwe Kafwaya as follows:

“Madam Speaker, I have a newspaper in my hands which I will lay on the Table. This newspaper has a heading entitled: Drugs shortage is political – ZAMMSA.

Madam Speaker, this is where I begun when your wisdom directed a Committee which is under your jurisdiction to go around the country and determine this problem, which Committee brought the report here. We debated and then the hon. Minister of Health refused the recommendations of your Committee.

Madam Speaker, the board chairperson for the Zambia Medicines and Medical Supplies Agency (ZAMMSA), a woman of impeccable repute, Dr Anna Chifungula, submits as follows.

Madam Speaker I will just quote three portions because the article is long. It states as follows:

‘Dr Anna Chifungula, the ZAMMSA board chairperson, says the agency was not allowed to procure medicines and other medical supplies from suppliers which were considered not be in good standing with the new dawn administration.’

Madam Speaker, I skip to a paragraph which states as follows:

‘Dr Chifungula said the report by the Parliamentary committee on the availability of drugs was very good and the board actually adopted it.’

Madam Speaker, my final quote is as follows:

‘We were being told not to deal with that one and that one to an extent that we had to request for some office of the President officials to help us pick which one we can deal with or not.’

Madam Speaker, the board chairperson says that the reason there are no drugs is because the United Party for National Development (UPND) Government did not want to deal with certain suppliers. The board chairperson says that the agency went to an officer at State House to find out from State House which suppliers should be contacted.

Madam Speaker, my question to Her Honour the Vice-President is: Will she let the hon. Minister of Health fail to supervise ZAMMSA because of political influence coming from State House when millions of Zambia may die as a result of this dire need of medicines?”

Madam Speaker, in responding to Hon. Mutotwe Kafwaya question, I wish to inform this august House, and through this House the nation, that there is no political influence whatsoever coming from State House or the Office of the President that interferes with the operations ZAMMSA, as is being alleged by Hon. Mutotwe Kafwaya.

Madam Speaker, ZAMMSA has been left to operate freely and devoid of any political interference. However, the Government is in support, and I will repeat, the Government is in support of vetting of suppliers as this is in line with the Government’s position of assuring the three key principles of procurement. These three principles are ensuring quality, the right price and timely delivery of goods and services. These are principles observed by my Government and its spending agencies, including ZAMMSA. Therefore, the process should not been seen as a means of discrimination based on religion, tribe, ethnicity and/or political affiliation.

Madam Speaker, I wish to emphasise what I have stated before, that this Government is a Government of laws. We shall govern in accordance with the rule of law.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.
