

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**  
**REMOVAL OF STREET VENDORS**  
**BY THE**  
**THE MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT (MR**  
**(NKOMBO), MP**

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to render a ministerial statement. I wish to thank you for giving me this opportunity to render this very important statement, on the Government effort to move traders to the correct and designated trading places.

Madam Speaker, fellow hon. Members of Parliament, street vending has been one of the major activities in the informal economy of our country, and the ever-growing population has led to an increase exponentially in this activity called street vending. It is seen as a means of earning income for those who are trading on the streets, and it has also served those who are unable to secure gainful employment.

Madam Speaker, various reasons have been forward for those who are perpetuating street vending as justification for trading on the streets. These include, among others, the ease of customer access, inadequate trading places, and inadequate essential services, including water and sanitation facilities.

Madam Speaker, the problem of street vending is not a new one in our country. The problem can be traced back to the post-colonial era, and it became more pronounced after 1991 following the liberalisation of our economy. In the late 1990s, the Government then constructed the ultra-modern market, the new Soweto Market, in Lusaka, to cater for street vendors. The construction was preceded by the relocation of all the vendors who used to run their daily businesses in the streets to the spaces allocated to them in the new market infrastructure. Initially, the vendors fought to be allocated stalls in the market, but consequentially, most vendors returned to the streets as the fees of operating in the markets were slightly high for most vendors and they could not afford them. Hence, those who could afford to pay occupied the stalls and those who could not decided to go back to the streets.

Madam Speaker, in 1999, the Government initiated a campaign to remove street vendors from the Central Business District (CBD) of Lusaka and all other towns in our country in order to occupy the established and formal markets. This campaign was motivated by the need to create a conducive environment, promote better health, and increase security for the town or urban populations and the vendors. However, it was in 2002 that the Government, with the help of law enforcement agents such as the paramilitary and police personnel, managed to get rid of the vendors and took them off the streets back to the markets. The law enforcement officers were stationed in heavily trafficked parts of Lusaka for quite a while to ensure that the vendors did not get back to the streets.

Madam Speaker, despite these efforts, the Government failed to achieve its objective because of several reasons, among them, inadequate markets or trading places with few available spaces lacking services, as I said earlier on, of water supply and sanitation, electricity, and refuse disposal. This, Madam Speaker, fellow hon. Members of Parliament, led to traders returning to the streets.

Madam Speaker, on 8<sup>th</sup> December, 2010, the Zambian Republican President then, Mr Rupiah Bwezani Banda, may his soul rest in peace, officially opened the new Soweto Market. During this official opening, he urged street vendors to move to the markets and utilise the infrastructure that the Government had put up instead of trading on the streets. The President warned that the law would be used to pursue those who would be found defying it and going back to the streets. He noted that although traders faced many challenges, there was a need for them to take up the spaces that were available in the constructed markets.

Madam Speaker, in late 2017 and early 2018, Lusaka was faced with a widening cholera epidemic, and at that time, the President then, Dr Edgar Lungu, called the police and the paramilitary to raze all makeshift stalls in the city and remove street vendors from the CBD. In addition, the Government added stricter provisions to Zambia's Street Vending and Nuisances Act by passing Statutory Instrument No. 12 of 2018 on street vending and public nuisance, which expressly prohibited street vending and classified it as a public nuisance, making it an offence for

anyone to trade in undesignated places. The Statutory Instrument No. 12 was meant to respond to various challenges arising from street vending, including but not limited to the following:

- (a) indiscriminate disposal of solid waste;
- (b) blocking of drainages;
- (c) erection of makeshift stores and booths;
- (d) preparation and selling of foodstuff in an unsafe environment;
- (e) illegal sale of intoxicating substances, including liquor;
- (f) non-payment of council levies; and
- (g) deterioration of public health and safety standards.

Madam Speaker, I am happy today that I think the hon. Minister who signed this Statutory Instrument at that time may be sitting with us in this House. In a normal society, there will be certain things that should not and must not be negotiated or compromised. These include *inter alia*:

- (a) state security;
- (b) laws of the land;
- (c) public order; and
- (d) public health.

Madam Speaker, despite these efforts, and following the unfortunate gutting of Soweto Market back in the year, many traders were displaced and that resulted in the phenomenon of street vending worsening. To bring sanity to street vending, and while working to restore the gutted Soweto Market, the Government at that time, fairly so, decided according to the law, to designate two streets, that is, Lumumba Road and Freedom Way South ends market streets. It allowed people to stay and trade there whilst waiting for the repair of the burnt Soweto Market. This resulted in others taking advantage of this noble gesture by the Government then. These traders left the market stalls. They left the designated trading places.

Madam Speaker, the issue of traders deserting the designated trading places spread like wildfire in our country. It became malignant. Even in areas where this crisis did not exist, in many of our towns in our country, people decided to vacate markets and preferred to go and work and do their trading off the wall or on the streets. It was worse in the major cities of our country such as Chipata, Ndola, Kitwe and all other municipalities. Furthermore, and worse still, we got challenged because where they decided to go and trade from, there was absence of sanitary facilities, to be specific, toilets to service the high traffic of human beings. This situation became aggravated every day that passed, with our citizens, due to lack of toilet facilities, using chibuku packs to answer the call of nature for solid waste and dumping these indiscriminately anywhere and everywhere. The councils became overwhelmed and could not match the generation of waste, worse still, not just waste but human fecal matter, which was being dumped here, there, everywhere, including in phone booths that were not secured when the owners knocked off.

Madam Speaker, the swamping of our citizens in the CBD created new but more complicated challenges that can easily affect state security and order. It saw the heightening of criminal activities and the sale of undesired illicit alcohol as well as psychotropic substances such as marijuana or chamba or dobo, heroin, cocaine powder, and mugging of citizens. People started feeling unsafe because these consumers of the illicit psychotropic substances and alcohol, legal and illegal alcohol, did not only become desensitised to the plight of other citizens but also became inebriated continuously. Most of them have moved now into a state of mind that we commonly refer to as junkies. They disturb peace of our citizens.

Madam Speaker, crimes ranging from petty pick pocketing to knifing and mugging people have kept the Zambia Police Service busy over this period, where children who are juveniles have become delinquent and drink endlessly. They get high, cease or black out and wake up. Now their domicile is actually described as living off the wall. That is what has become their normal life.

Madam Speaker, the problem of street vending reached record high during the time of the previous Government. I want to be excused because at this point, I am not passing blame to anyone but stating things as they are. The previous Government started allocating land in the CBD and in road reserves for the erection of clutters or containers, which they described as temporary developments, but they became the order of the day. It did allocate pieces of land that should have been managed by local authorities but were managed by political cadres who also gave out spaces ranging from mobile money booths to clutter containers that have been welded on walkways very close to the roads. An example that I can give of what I am trying to describe can be found easily on Dedan Kimathi Road opposite the Intercity Bus Station, where there is literally no space between the tarmac and where these clutter containers were built. This saw everyone else looking at this as an opportunity to go and set up shop.

Madam Speaker, as if we were to add salt to injury, the allocated places on Bombay Drainage and building shops there. As I am talking to you right now, plastic has a given a blockage to the well intended Bombay Drainage that should have been serving water management and reduce flooding in our city.

Madam Speaker, in our continued effort to address this growing problem of vending, the ministry that I am privileged to run or presides over, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, in the last quarter of 2022, directed the Lusaka City Council to undertake an audit of available markets spaces or stands in Lusaka, as well as conduct a head count of all street vendors in the Central Business District (CBD) and this was done. Further engagement were made or undertaken with the vendors themselves through the respective associations to build consensus and find a long lasting solution to this health threatening misadventure.

Madam Speaker, the findings indicated that as of May, 2023, a total number of trading spaces in Lusaka stood at 11,039, of these, 6,624 were occupied. This means that we have 4,992 of these trading spaces remained unoccupied. Against the head count 4,415 street vendors, it means that if these complied, we will have a lesser problem. It will be easy for us to accommodate our people whom we dearly love to go into designated trading areas even if it were to be temporal, while Government is organising itself to broaden the capacity of market or trading or designated trading places to accommodate all those who are in the economic business of selling.

Madam Speaker, on 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2023, measures were announced to mitigate the outbreak of two pandemics by the Ministry of Health. My counterpart the Minister of Health did announce that there was a possible outbreak of Cholera, having recorded one case in Chipata or is it Vubwi and that Coronavirus Disease -2019 (Covid-19) started coming back. Therefore, we needed- she moved me as minister responsible for Minister of Local Government and Rural Development to prepare sanitary conditions in all the trading places in Lusaka. In line with the provisions of the Statutory Instrument (SI) No.12 of 2018, I, as Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, further directed the Lusaka City Council and all the Local Authorities countrywide to remove the street vendors from undesigned trading places.

Madam Speaker, this statement had been preceded by another statement which Her Honour the Vice-President, at re-opening ceremony of the Soweto Market, that her desire was to see that all those who had been displaced by the fire of 2018, must go back as the market was now ready. Very few heeded to this advice and they continued to sell on the streets.

Madam Speaker, after we made this decree, the ministry was going to start re-locating our traders on a Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> of January, 2022, on the eve weekend of that action, I was directed by the President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr Hakainde Hichilema, that he felt we had not done sufficient consultation to act on this Government desire for our people to go back into the designated trading places. The directive was that, go out and consult more. Get a buy in from as many stakeholders as possible. So, we decided that we were going to follow as directed. Being the obedient minister that I am, we first met the Council of Churches in Zambia and we

presented our issue. They informed us that they would get back to us with their position. Fortunately, the position was in the affirmative and also in writing. They were very clear that, as much as we have to follow the law, we must do it in a manner that is humane, a manner that provides alternatives for those that may be lacking.

Madam Speaker, we consulted with the councillors, we had a dedicated symposium with councillors and the Members of Parliament from Lusaka where the problem was exacerbated. At that consultative meeting, a *communiqué* was signed by all those in attendance from both divides of the two major political parties being the Patriotic Front (PF) and the United Party for National Development (UPND) that this was a necessary action to take. We consulted the Non Governmental Organisation Coordinating Council (NGOCC) and other churches. All the organisations that we consulted indicated that we must move our citizens to the designated trading places in a humane manner.

Madam Speaker, to add more salt to injury, to this issue of undesignated trading places practice; we also saw a proliferation of our citizens in Freedom Way who have made the entire street a garage where cars are being repaired 24/7. You go there in the morning, you find they are repairing ball joints and even overhauling engines in town. We have engaged them and fortunately they have seen the sense of bringing back sanity among ourselves and not to heighten this phenomenon any more. They are willing to move. They are appealing on us to find an area where they can conduct their business. As minister privileged, I saw it responsible for this maiden undertaken that we will address that matter.

Madam Speaker, this particular activity increased contravening of traffic rules because bus drivers faced congestion and people who can do business in the CBD could not find parking. Therefore, it was total confusion. It was like Gehenna or Sodom and Gomorrah.

Madam Speaker, again, we had an issue where the Central Business District (CBD) became a showroom for automobiles. People started displaying cars for sale. They would park their cars thereby disturbing those who were reporting to work on a daily basis. We have since engaged them. In our consultative fashion, I took the Association of Motor Traders to my colleague, the

Minister of Transport and Logistics, about seven months ago. This is work that has been going on behind the scenes, and requested him to accommodate them behind the EML or Impala Service Station open space that belongs to Zambia Railways Limited for them to trading of their brand-new second-hand motor vehicles behind EML and between the rail line and Impala Service Station. This is almost getting accomplished and this is our way of trying to bring order back to our good selves

Madam Speaker, I would like to go and end by making an appeal to my hon. Colleague, Member of Parliament to buy in this particular move that we have made because it is in line with the law that is established. Obviously, to migrate from one culture to another causes a bit of instability, a little bit of anxiety and uncertainty. I would like to assure hon. Members that if we join hands on this matter, we will be remembered as one group of people that were on the right side of the divide of the argument and that there came a time when matters that affect people whose interests and aspirations we are here to serve, we can be unanimous in this.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Zambia, Her Honour the Vice-President, the Cabinet and indeed, my own behalf, I am on my knees, not pleading for clemency no, but pleading for you to see the reason why we must move in this direction while filling in the gaps that may exist as a result of this cultural shift.

Madam Speaker, I would like to now terminate by saying, once we get it right, as we seem to have gotten it in right in Lusaka, what come may, our desire is to sanitise the whole country so that we can be proud once again that we preserved state security, decided to walk alongside the law established in the spirit of brotherly love and sisterly affection, we sat together on this particular day and agreed that we will look after our vendors, our citizens, not only vendors, but the unemployed, the sick and the less privileged. As you now ask me questions, I would like to pre-empt you by saying, the cry has been that most of these people are orphans, head of homes and that they are widows. Yes, it is true. However, what is good for the goose is good for the gander. Even in the Soweto Market there are widows and orphans. These contribute to the successful operations of the council, which council we found limping and limping very badly.



Madam Speaker, just today, I want to thank the former vendors for that move, I want to confirm that the New Soweto Market, admitted 300 traders from the streets. Our manager at the market has established an extra thirty-four depots for them to keep their merchandise during hours of darkness. The City Market, which was gutted, has also admitted, today, 300 traders. Our manager there, Mr Kambeu, has indicated that today alone, from council levies, they made a net collection of K30,000 more, which is money which is supposed to go to the council.

Madam Speaker, it is for this reason that I stand before you and all hon. Members of Parliament request that we hold our hands on this matter. That is not to say, they cannot ask any questions on points of clarifications if, it will serve the purpose of us moving in unison as we look after this country.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank you most sincerely.

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