

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON HIS
EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT MR HAKAINDE HICHILEMA'S VISIT TO THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FOR THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 76TH
SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
BY THE
HON. MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION
(MR KAKUBO), MP

Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present to this august House a report on the visit to the United States of America (USA) by the seventh President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr Hakainde Hichilema, who attended the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in the USA. The Republican President was amongst seventy-eight Heads of State and Government who travelled to the USA for the UNGA and high-level segment meetings from 20th to 28th September 2021.

Madam, the President was accompanied in a lean delegation by the hon. Minister of Finance and National Planning, Dr Situmbeko Musokotwane, and the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and National Cooperation. The session of the UNGA was held under the following theme:

“Building resilience through hope to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainability, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people and revitalise UN relations”

The UNGA high-level segment was presided over by His Excellency Mr Abdulla Shahid of the Maldives, President of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Madam Speaker, the President's visit to the USA comprised of two segments covering both multilateral and bilateral engagements in both New York and Washington DC. The highlight of

this visit to the USA was the meeting with the Vice-President of the USA and, of course, the Secretary-General of the UN in New York.

Madam, the UNGA is the main policy making body of the global family of nations. It provides a unique platform for multilateral discussions of a broad spectrum of international issues, including peace, security and developmental issues across the globe.

Madam, President Hakainde Hichilema also delivered his maiden speech to the UN assembly on 21st September 2021, which was the first day of the general assembly. In the President's historic speech, which as this House is aware, received overwhelming national and global accolades, he eloquently projected the economic transformation agenda of our country, which resonated well on the global stage.

Madam Speaker, I would like to strongly encourage any hon. Member of this august House that may have neither read nor watched the video of the President's Speech to do so. My ministry is ready to avail hard copies as well as links to this important and well celebrated speech. In addition to delivering his maiden speech, the President, Mr Hakainde Hichilema, also participated in four critical virtual summits that covered key topics that are critical to our national development agenda. These included:

- (a) Sustainable Development Goals;
- (b) the 2021 Food System Summit;
- (c) the high-level dialogue on energy; and
- (d) the global COVID-19 Summit.

Madam Speaker, in response to the overwhelming global goodwill that the President continues to receive since his landmark victory in the last election, a series of bilateral meetings were held with world leaders. These included the following:

- (a) a meeting with the Secretary-General of the UN, an appointment that is not easy to obtain, especially during UNGA;
- (b) a meeting with the President of the European Council, at their request;
- (c) a meeting with the President of Austria, at their request; and
- (d) a meeting with the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), at their request, among others.

Madam Speaker, I am aware that some hon. Members of this House may have expressed reservations about the President's trip to New York to attend the UNGA. Considering the gravity of the challenges we face as a nation, I wish to categorically and respectfully state that it was necessary for the Republican President to attend these meetings.

Madam, hon. Members will agree that there is merit in having face to face meetings with leaders of influence across the globe, especially when you have challenges at home. It is for this reason that the President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr Hakainde Hichilema, had to proceed to Washington DC, where a broad range of meticulously selected high-level meetings were held in line with the economic transformation agenda of the 'New Dawn' Government.

Madam, the President had a rare opportunity to meet with Ms Kamala Harris, the Vice-President of the USA at the White House. This visit to the White House was historic. This marks the first time in more than two decades that a sitting Zambian President met with the top leadership of US Government. Only two other sitting Zambian Presidents have met with the top leadership of the USA at the White House since our independence more than half a century ago.

Madam Speaker, allow me at this point to highlight the visits of sitting Zambian Heads of State at the White House that have been officially documented by both the US and the Zambia Government:

- (a) the founding father and first Republican President, Dr Kenneth David Kaunda, met with:
- (i) President Gerald Ford on 19th April 1975;
 - (ii) President Jimmy Carter on 17th May 1978;
 - (iii) President Ronald Reagan on 30th March 1983; and
 - (iv) President Reagan on 8th October 1987; and
- (b) the 2nd Republican President, the late Dr. Frederick J. T. Chiluba, was met by President George W. Bush on February 19, 1992.

Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that the meeting between the President, Mr Hakainde Hichilema and Vice-President, Miss Kamala Harris will reignite and deepen the abiding friendship between Zambia and the United States of America. Furthermore, these generate benefits for both our two countries.

Madam Speaker, in his continued engagement with the USA, President Hakainde Hichilema also held fruitful discussions with heads of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the Development Finance Corporation (DFC). Further, as a mark of the confidence that the USA legislature has in the new dawn Government, the President was also granted audience with both congress and the senate, who are influential on us policy towards Africa.

Madam Speaker, the key amongst those that the President met at Capitol Hill was Senator Bob Menendez, Chairman of the USA Foreign Relations Committee and representative, Karen Bass, Chairperson of the USA House Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on Africa and Congressional Black Caucus.

Madam Speaker, the new dawn Government is committed to restoring macro-economic stability and fiscal discipline in order to deal with the huge debt burden that was left behind by the Patriotic Front (PF) Government. In this regard, President Hichilema also held meetings with the leaders of the two Breton Woods Institutions, which are the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Madam Speaker, the President also held meetings with the USA Chamber of Commerce, Africa Business Centre and the Corporate Council on Africa. He further addressed and participated in a panel discussion with the institute of peace. This administration is aware of the growing desire of the many Zambians who live abroad on their affinity to contribute to the social, political and social developmental agenda of this country. Therefore, the President took time to sit down with Zambians who live abroad and took note of their concerns.

Madam Speaker, the key message that President Hichilema, during his bilateral and multilateral meetings that he had in the USA is priorities as follows:

- (a) the need for economic recovery in our country to restore macro-economic stability and the urgent need to begin to dismantle the debt burden;
- (b) The President stressed on the need to increase trade and expand engagements with private sector investments across the world;
- (c) The President also stressed on the need and desire of the new dawn Government to restore the rule of law in the country. As it is known, this is a key requisite investor confidence;
- (d) The President also stressed the respect and promotion of human rights in our country, including improving the justice system and its delivery;

- (e) The President reaffirmed Zambia's active role in contributing towards regional and continental initiatives aimed at restoring peace, security and stability;
- (f) The President further stressed on the need for the media to be free and to restore their positions in our country at the same time being able to regulated themselves;
- (g) The President also stated on the need for human health security and the fight against the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19), particularly, he called for an increased vaccination availabilities as statistics now stands and our country has only being able to vaccinate 3 per cent of the our population against the target of 70 per cent; and
- (h) The President also stressed on the need to continuously put efforts to unify our country in order to guarantee inclusivity, peace and tranquility across the ten provinces.

Madam Speaker, this message which the President took to all his meetings was necessary, in order to restore confidence in the conducive environment that is been created across the country by the United Party for National Development (UPND) Government.

Madam Speaker, as I bring my statement to a close, I wish to highlight some of the outcomes of the recent visit undertaken by the Republican President, Mr Hakainde Hichilema, which I am confident, will yield positive results for our country and these are:

- (a) renewed confidence and goodwill from the international community, including enhancing the USA/Zambia relations;
- (b) the need to expedite the negotiations with the IMF and the World Bank in order to quickly conclude the negotiations;

- (c) there was need to secure Government funding for COVID-19, also for rural electrification and secure funding for on issues to do with governance. The President was able to secure US\$30 million immediately;
- (d) there was also need for the President to personally participate in negotiations with millennium challenge compact in order to restore our country's position with them which was suspended in 2018, due to poor governance under the PF; and
- (e) The President was also able to obtain pledges for technical support on issues of governance and improving our governance structures as a country.

Madam Speaker, because of the president's visit, there has been renewed interest in trade and investment in Zambia. Allow me at this point to conclude by submitting to this House that the President's visit to the USA as being a resounding success. The President, Mr Hichilema's visit was also pivotal in ensuring relations both at bilateral and multilateral levels with different countries was improved.

Madam Speaker, under the new dawn Government, the whole world is now looking at Zambia differently, but in a very positive way. This restores hope and dignity among our people, particularly the youth and the women. It also strengthens the country's credibility on the international arena.

Madam Speaker, Mr Hakainde Hichilema, the President of the Republic of Zambia, will therefore, and I must stress continue to undertake his role as the chief salesperson for the Zambian people, based on the overwhelming mandate given to him by the youth, women and all Zambian people.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.
