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Republic of Zambia

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT TO BE DELIVERED BY HON. HARRY KALABA, MP, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ON THE –

- (1) 7th HIGH LEVEL MEETING OF THE REGIONAL OVERSIGHT MECHANISM OF PEACE, SECURITY AND COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND THE REGION;**
- (2) 19th SUMMIT OF THE COMESA AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT AND PRECEDING 15th MEETING OF THE COMESA MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS; AND**
- (3) THE CAMPAIGN FOR ZAMBIAN CANDIDATURES FOR AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION POSITIONS.**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Lusaka

November, 2016

Mr. Speaker,

I wish to report to this August House on the main achievements of the country's participation in the Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR); and the 19th Summit of the COMESA Authority of Heads of State. I also wish to take this opportunity to highlight Zambia's efforts to field candidates for positions in the African Union Commission.

Mr. Speaker,

His Excellency the President attended the 7th High Level Meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM), for Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Region that was held in Luanda, Angola, on 26th October 2016. His Excellency the President was accompanied by myself and senior Government officials.

The purpose of the meeting was to review progress in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement and to assess the security situation in the Great Lakes Region with particular emphasis on the DRC, Burundi, South Sudan and Central African Republic.

Mr. Speaker,

The Heads of State and Government made several observations on the Implementation of the commitments as well as on the neutralisation of negative forces and repatriation of disarmed combatants.

The House may wish to note that the ICGLR is an effective platform for pursuing sustainable peace, security, stability and development in the Great Lakes Region. Since Zambia is not only geographically joined to these countries but also intertwined at the socio-economic level it is in our strategic interest to ensure that political stability is maintained.

The region provides a viable market for Zambian goods and services and a potential investment destination. It is, therefore, imperative that Zambia plays a prominent role in ensuring peace and security in the region. Equally, our engagement also gives the country a strategic edge to garner support for its own interests both at the regional and continental level as well as beyond.

In this regard, His Excellency the President held fruitful Bilateral meetings with his counterparts from Angola and the DRC on the margins of the Summit. As a result, His Excellency President Kabila has accepted to undertake a State Visit to Zambia during which political and economic matters will be discussed for mutual benefit of both countries and the region.

In addition, the Ministry is preparing for a mini-Summit among three countries of Angola, Zambia and DRC which will enable the Heads of State to discuss matters of mutual interest and the shared desire to develop a growth triangle in the region.

Mr. Speaker,

I also wish to report that His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia led the Zambian delegation to the 19th Summit of the COMESA Authority of Heads of State and Government that was held in Antananarivo, Madagascar, on 18th and 19th October 2016, under the theme *"Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialisation"*.

The COMESA Summit was preceded by the 15th Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs that deliberated on the peace and security situation in the region and the 36th Meeting of the Council of Ministers that prepared the agenda for Summit.

Mr. Speaker,

I am happy to report that His Excellency the President delivered his Maiden Speech at the Summit reaffirming Zambia's commitment to the aspirations of COMESA.

The President reiterated Zambia's honour and privilege to host the regional body and highlighted that the Government had made available ten (10) acres of land for the construction of the new and modern COMESA Headquarters in Lusaka.

In this regard, Summit expressed appreciation to the Zambian Government for its generosity and called for the commencement of the construction immediately after the formalities were concluded. Indeed the hosting of this important regional institution will continue bringing Zambia a number of benefits including job creation and placement of Zambian nationals which is one of the objectives of Zambia's Foreign Policy that is aimed at advancing national interest.

Mr. Speaker,

In considering the Report of the COMESA Committee of Elders which included Election Observer Missions, Summit commended Zambia and in particular the Electoral Commission of Zambia for organising successful elections as well as the Zambian people for conducting themselves in a peaceful manner before, during and after elections.

Summit, therefore, congratulated His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu and Her Honour Mrs. Inonge Mutukwa Wina, MP., upon their election as President and Vice President of the Republic of Zambia, respectively.

It is, indeed, encouraging to receive such accolades and recognition at the regional level, for our adherence as a country to the values of democracy, peace, and good governance.

Mr. Speaker,

We are indeed blessed as a country for the peace and stability that we continue to enjoy and should cherish this as a gift from God Almighty. As we are all aware, other countries in the region continue to face conflict and displacement of their people which has posed a humanitarian challenge that requires collective effort.

In this regard, Zambia was one of the countries recognised and thanked by Summit for hosting refugees coming from conflict-torn countries and Member States were urged to emulate those who were assisting refugees in order to ease the burden.

This goes to show that Zambia's efforts are appreciated and make a difference in the region which is in line with our Foreign Policy values of good neighbourliness, non-discrimination and co-existence.

Mr. Speaker,

Zambia's geographical position as a landlinked country provides comparative advantage for being a hub for various economic activities such as cross-border trade. However, lack of information and capacity can limit the potential to maximize benefits from such strategic opportunities.

I am, therefore, pleased to report that Summit noted that Zambia has benefitted under the COMESA Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development programme by way of a new Trade Information Desk in Mokambo as well as sanitation facilities for small scale cross border traders on both sides of Mokambo border. This is in addition to another Trade Information Desk on the Zambian side of the Kasumbalesa border as well as workshops held for members of the Cross Border Traders Association.

Mr. Speaker,

Promotion of trade is one of the objectives of Zambia's Foreign Policy as an engine of economic growth and socio-economic development. Towards this end, the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Agreement (TFTA) will provide participating countries with expanded markets and increase market access for their products.

Summit, therefore, commended the eighteen (18) Member States, including Zambia that have signed the Tripartite Agreement and urged them to complete the ratification process so that the Agreement can enter into force and benefits can begin to accrue.

Mr. Speaker,

In terms of regional programmes, Summit considered the status of Industrialisation in the COMESA region and urged Member States to implement the COMESA Industrialisation Policy in order to produce value added products so as to increase intra-COMESA trade in manufactured and inter-mediate products.

This is in line with the Zambian aspirations of value addition and diversification as well as the SADC Industrialisation strategy to drive integration using industrialisation as a tool and thereby create jobs. The regional and national efforts are therefore in tandem and our country stands to benefit immensely from the synergies the will accrue.

Mr. Speaker,

As I bring my submission to a close, it is clear that the benefits and achievements which I have highlighted are directly related to the level of engagements of our Head of State with the international community in this case, under COMESA and the ICGLR.

Government's vision for international relations is *'for Zambia to be an effective and influential player on the regional and international arena; maximising the benefits that accrue to the country from being a member of the international community.'*

Mr. Speaker,

I am happy to announce that through this strong and purposeful interaction with the international community Zambia has secured two candidates for the Commissioner positions at the African Union Commission.

The two are Ambassador Albert Muchanga and Dr. Austin Sichinga for the position of Commissioner - Trade and Industry and the position of Commissioner – Rural Economy and Agriculture, respectively. The candidates are the SADC regional candidates for those positions after being selected through a competitive process at a SADC forum. The COMESA Summit in turn noted the candidatures and urged Member States to support them.

The final selection will be undertaken at the AU Executive Council Meeting to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January, 2017. My Ministry is embarking on a rigorous campaign to lobby other African countries for the subsequent election of the Zambian candidates during that meeting next January.

Lastly **Mr. Speaker**, I wish to emphasise that it is only by interaction with the international community, at all levels, that Zambia can meet its Foreign Policy objective of advancing its national interests.

I, therefore, wish to state as I have done before in this house that the active participation of His Excellency the President in regional, continental and global affairs, as well as his increased interactions and engagements at bilateral level will continue to advance Zambia's standing on the international stage and serve to promote Zambia's national interests.

Zambia will therefore continue to reach out to the international community in order to advance our national interest.

Mr Speaker,

I thank you.