

TRANSITING OF CONTAINERISED MUKULA LOGS FROM THE DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Mr Speaker, I wish to thank you for according me this opportunity to deliver a ministerial statement to this august House and the nation at large on the transiting through Zambia of containerised Mukula logs from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) destined for export to china.

Mr Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the Government of the Republic of Zambia through my ministry received a request from the DRC to transit Mukula logs through Zambia. After wider consultations, Cabinet authorised my Ministry to allow Mukula logs from the DRC to transit though Zambia as a good will gesture to our sister country.

After authority was granted by Cabinet to allow the transit of Mukula logs from the DRC, my Ministry engaged the Ministry of Justice for legal guidance in view if the existing Statutory Instrument No. 31 which is the Control of Goods Import and Export, Forest Produce, Prohibition of Importation Order, 2017. Which prohibited the importation, including transiting of logs of specified timber species through Zambia. The Ministry of Justice provided legal advice and subsequently my Ministry issued Statutory Instrument No. 96 of 2018, as amended by Statutory Instrument No. 8 of 2019. The Control of Goods Import and Export, Forest Produce, Authorisation of Importation, DRC (Amendment) Order, 2018, The Statutory Instrument authorises the Government of the DRC to transit 3,400, 40 foot containers laden with Mukula logs for a period of six months with effect from the 28th December 2018.

Mr Speaker, you may wish to know that the Government of the DRC imposed a ban on the timber harvesting in the DRC. Subsequently all the illegally harvested logs were confiscated and sold to the Katanga Artisanal Forest Exploiters Association (AEFAKat). The AEFAKat are now in possession of 3,400, 40 foot containers laden with Mukula logs which they intend to export to China through Zambia.

Mr Speaker, it is on this premise that the Government of the DRC wrote through diplomatic channels to request for a special consideration to undertake a one-off transit exercise of the 3,400 containers. Mr Speaker, the transiting of the 3,400 containers laden with Mukula logs from the Democratic Republic of the Congo through Zambia will only be done under security escort. This will deter all would be fraudsters in Zambia who would want to include locally illegally harvested Mukula as part of transit. The Zambian Government will provide security personnel and technical officers from the Forestry Department and the Zambia Revenue Authority to escort the consignments from the port of entry in Kasumbalesa to the port of exit in Chirundu, Kazungula, Nakonde and Katima Mulilo. The Central Joint Operation Committee (CJOC) has already been engaged in preparation for implementation of the exercise. This exercise will be carried out over a period of approximately eighty working days staggered over a period of six months.

Mr Speaker, the cost associated with the escort of the consignments will not be borne by the Government of the Republic of Zambia but by the Katanga Artisanal Forest Exploiters Association who has since agreed to this requirement.

Sir, the Government of the Republic of Zambia is expected to collect revenue through inspection fees, toll fees and clearing charges. This will also promote sustainable forest management, as it will ensure that no local illegally harvested timber is moved under this arrangement.

Mr Speaker, I wish to inform this House that in order to avoid illegally harvested Mukula in Zambia being exported, the defence and security officers will continue to monitoring timber harvesting and transportation in the country.

Mr Speaker, as I conclude, I wish to state that my ministry will ensure the smooth passage of the consignments from the Democratic Republic of Congo will transit through Zambia in line with the trade facilitation principles under the World Trade Organisation to which Zambia is part to.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.