

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON THE

PLANNED POWER OUTAGE AT KAFUE GORGE POWER STATION

BY THE

MINISTER OF ENERGY (MR NKHUWA), MP

Mr Speaker, I wish to thank you for according me this opportunity to present a ministerial statement on the planned outage at Kafue Gorge Power Station to facilitate the filling of Kafue Gorge Lower Dam.

Mr Speaker, the construction of the 750 MW Kafue Gorge Lower Power Station commenced in 2016. This project is valued at US\$2.3 billion. The project is located in Chikankata District of the Southern Province and is currently at 93 per cent completion.

Mr Speaker, as earlier stated, the project has advanced and the initial phase of power generation will commence soon. The commissioning of the first phase entails filling of the dam with water known as impounding process, which is planned to start on Sunday, 8th November, 2020. The process is expected to take at least one week.

Mr Speaker, the Kafue Gorge Lower lies on the downstream of the existing Kafue Gorge Upper Power Station with an installed capacity of 990 MW. With the planned commissioning of Kafue Gorge Lower, ZESCO Limited will have to restrict generation upstream at the Kafue Gorge Upper Power Station by closing the diversion tunnels and gates at Kafue Gorge Lower Dam, thereby reducing water dispensing from Kafue Gorge Upper.

Mr Speaker, as a result of this reduced power generation, the activities of the new dam filling will result into increased load shedding first for twenty-four hours a day as power generation will be considerably reduced. During the subsequent six days, reduced generation at Kafue Gorge Upper Power Station will be maintained at a level to control the rate of filling up the new dam. The nationwide load management programme will maintain Level III of the Weather Induced Power Deficit of 2019 (WIPOD-19), which translates into eight to twelve hours of load shedding.

Mr Speaker, once the dam is successfully filled, the first two generator units, each with 150 MW capacity, will then be commissioned. It is expected that the first unit will be commissioned end of November 2020, while the second unit is expected to be commissioned at the end of December 2020. The last three of the five generator units are expected to be commissioned in 2021, bringing the total 750 MW online. Once this historical stage of the dam is filling is completed, the preparations of firing up the first 150 MW generator will then be expedited towards easing of the current 810 MW power deficit.

Mr Speaker, allow me also to state that on Friday, 23rd October, 2020, a flash fire ignited at the Kafue Gorge Lower Project site. The flash fire accident occurred in the afternoon when three workers were assigned to cut some protruding steel bars on the dam concrete. As the workers were cutting the steel bars, hot slug from the cutting torch fell onto the safety nylon rope that was attached to the motorised elevator working platform and a portion of the burning rope fell to the foot of the dam onto a pile of remnant sealant coating that had been applied to the dam wall, thus igniting the fire. On a sad note, we lost two of the workers who sustained severe burns from the incident and may the souls of our dearly departed rest in peace.

Sir, despite that accident, construction works did not stop. Thus the planned commissioning of the initial phase is still on course. I must state that the planned commissioning of the initial phase is as a result of concerted efforts to ensure that safety regulations are observed at all times.

Mr Speaker, may I end by informing the nation that the Government will continue to ensure security of supply of electricity is assured for the benefit of the people and economic development and industrialisation.

I thank you, Sir.