

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

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ON THE PURPORTED ISSUANCE OF THE NATIONAL REGISTRATION CARDS (NRCs) TO NON-ELIGIBLE PERSONS DURING THE 2020 MOBILE ISSUANCE OF THE NATIONAL REGISTRATION CARDS AND AN UPDATE ON THE INTEGRATED NATIONAL REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION SYSTEM (INRIS)

BY THE

MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (MR KAMPYONGO), MP

Mr Speaker, I would like to start by thanking you for giving me this opportunity to render a Ministerial Statement on the purported issuance of National Registration Cards (NRC) to non eligible persons during the 2020 Mobile Registration Cards. The exercise was intended to provide access to the acquisition of National Registration Cards by citizens who have attained the age of sixteen (16) and above, especially those who cannot easily reach District National Registration Offices.

Sir, the Ministry of Home Affairs through the department of National Registration Passport and Citizenship, is charged with the responsibility of conducting National Civil Registration as well as issuance of travel documents. The department also facilitates the acquisition of citizenship. The mandate is derived from the national Registration Act 126, Passport Act No. 28 of 2016, and Citizenship, Act No.33 of 2016. Birth and Death Registration Act CAP 51 of the Laws of Zambia. Marriage Act CAP 51 of the Law of Zambia and Adoption Act CAP 54 of the Laws of Zambia. National registration entails registration of all eligible persons and issuing them with appropriate National Registration Cards as legal identity in accordance with National Registration Act 126 of the Laws of Zambia. This undertaking is conducted on a continuous and outreach basis. Between 1st August and the 4th of November, 2020, outreach activities were

conducted in the form of a mobile National Registration exercise. This undertaking was country wide and was carried out in two (2) phased, each of these phases covered five provinces.

Mr Speaker, as I indicated in my last Ministerial Statement on the statement of mobile registration cards, the Ministry of Home Affairs planned to issue a total number of 1,500 National Registration Cards to eligible Zambians. To this end, I am proud to report that the ministry performed above target. As total of 1,592,970 National Registration Cards were issued between the 1st August and 4th November of 2020 representing 106 per cent overall performance.

Sir, such a mammoth task could not have gone without challenges. Prior to the exercise in January 2019 the department of National Registration, Passports and Citizenship lost a total number of 1500 000 blank National Registration Cards in the serial number range from Z 14228001 to Z14229500.

This matter was reported to the Zambia Police Service which, in turn, instituted investigations. Three officers from the Department of National Registration, Passports and Citizenship have been arrested and will appear in the Courts of law soon.

Sir, on 18th October, 2020, two officials from a known Opposition political party, while being featured on a Muvi Television Programme known as the “Assignment” produced a large stack of NRCs that they claimed were irregularly issued. One of the NRCs displayed on this Muvi TV programme was discovered to have had a serial number Z14228282 which was within the range of the lost 1,500 blank NRCs.

Mr Kampyongo: The Zambia Police Service has since arrested the two officials for forgery, uttering of false a document, and being in possession of property believed to have been stolen or feloniously obtained.

It is disheartening Sir, to note that some sections of society have been spreading falsehoods that NRCs were or are being issued to under age children and to foreigners. This misinformation and propaganda is carefully orchestrated to discredit the Government. Let me assure the nation

through this august House, just like I did assure when I last addressed the House on these matters that the Department of National Registration, Passports and Citizenship is strictly adhering to the provisions of the law in the implementation of its programmes.

Sir, on 13th September, 2020, during the phase one of the mobile issuance of NRCs, a very disturbing incident happened at Chitamba Mobile Registration Centre in Lukashya of Kasama District. The brief facts of the events leading to the theft and damage of national registration equipment are that, on the material date, at about 1330 hours, five men clad in United Party for National Development (UPND) regalia approached the mobile team and grabbed a set of equipment which included a thermal photo printer, a touch screen monitor, a camera, two typewriters, a generator set and other materials. They harassed and threatened violence against the officers who fled for their safety. The matter was reported to the police who instituted investigations, and so far, police have managed to arrest five suspects who were detained in police custody and later charged with the offence of aggravated robbery and malicious damage to property. The suspects have since appeared in the Courts of law.

Mr Speaker, as a way to mitigate illegal and irregular activities, the Government is in the process of rolling out the Integrated National Registration and Information System (INRIS). The INRIS is a system for electronic civil registration of all Zambian citizens. Demographic and biometric attributes and ultimate issuance of the biometric enabled digital NRC. The system will also act as a single most secure source of verifying and identifying citizenship status of persons living in Zambia whether indigenous citizens, residents or migrates and facilitate access to transactional and none transactional public services. It will also reduce expenditure by the Government treasury for investments in similar identification infrastructure dotted in various institutions.

Mr Speaker, I wish to report that implementation of the INRIS which has taken a multi-sectoral approach has commenced. The following ministries and institutions have been actively involved: Cabinet Office; Smart Zambia Institute (SZI); Ministry of Finance; Ministry of National Development Planning; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Transport and Communications; Ministry of Community Development and Social Services; Ministry of Agriculture; the Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA); Zambia Revenue Authority

(ZRA); National Pensions Scheme Authority (NAPSA); Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ); Bank of Zambia, Zambia Telecommunications Corporation (ZAMTEL), National Savings and Credit Bank (NATSAVE); Road Transport and Safety Agency (RTSA); Infratel and Zambia National Airports.

Mr Speaker, these stakeholders are coordinated through a governance structure which has the National Steering Committee, the Project Management Committee; and five technical working groups namely; Change Management; Legal and Policy; Enrolment and Training; Infrastructure, Software and Standards; and Resource Mobilisation.

Sir, allow me to now update this august House on what has been done so far.

- (a) in order to attain collection of multi biometrics, the Government has amended Statutory Instrument No.34 of 2019, to include for collection of other biometrics such as iris, facial and Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) in a prescribed manner;
- (b) a Memorandum of Understanding has been entered into all Government and quasi-Government institutions earmarked to be appointed as registration agencies. This will ensure that transmission and sharing of data from enrolment centres to the central critical data base shall be done in a more secure manner;
- (c) upgrading of the automated biometrics information systems software has been completed and deployed at Infratel in Lusaka in readiness for collection of biometrics;
- (d) the Government has procured 150 biometrics kits and one engraver. These are already in the country; and
- (e) the project secretariat has been set up at the Department of National Registration, Passports and Citizenship to coordinate implementation of activities.

Mr Speaker, I want to assure this august House and through it the nation at large that with the K9 million in the 2021 Budget and funds pledged by partners, the ministry is to begin the collection of biometric data once the enrolment kits are deployed in the course of the year. This exercise is critical and such; I wish to call upon all stakeholders and hon. Members of this august House to support the process.

Mr Speaker, as I conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to caution those that are using social media and other platforms to spread falsehoods, that the long arm of the law will visit them regardless of their status in society. The Government will not allow desperate politicians to discredit democratic processes through transmission of messages of hatred and propaganda.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.
