

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON THE

STATUS OF THE 2020 MOBILE NATIONAL REGISTRATION CARD REGISTRATION

BY THE

HON. MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (MR KAMPYONGO), MP

Madam Speaker, let me start by thanking you for giving me this opportunity to render a ministerial statement to update this august House and the nation at large on the status of the 2020 Mobile Issuance of National Registration Cards. The 2020, Mobile Issuance of National Registration Cards is intended to provide increased 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. The exercise is meant to empower citizens with National Registration Cards (NRC) to enable them participate in the economic activities and the electoral process of the country.

Madam Speaker, on the 25th June, 2020, you, Madam, allowed me to issue a ministerial statement on the 2020, Mobile Issuance of National Registration Cards. In my address, I informed this august House that Government through the Department of National Registration Passport and Citizenship under the Ministry of Home Affairs was to conduct mobile registration in all the ten provinces of this country in a two-phased approach. I now wish to report that the first phase started on the 1st August, 2020 in the five provinces namely; Northern, Luapula, Copperbelt, North Western and Eastern provinces. The second phase was scheduled to commence on 1st September, 2020, in the following five provinces; Muchinga, Central, Lusaka, Southern and Western Provinces. The target for the 2020 Mobile National Registration Exercise is to issue a total of 1,500,000 NRCs, comprising 770,000 under phase I and 730,000 under phase II.

Madam Speaker, let me thank the hon. Minister of Finance for releasing an amount of K200 million for the exercise. I am pleased to report that the Ministry of Home Affairs through the department on National Registration Passport and Citizenship commenced phase 1 of the Mobile Issuance of National Registration Cards on 1st August, 2020 in the five provinces as planned. However, I wish to inform this august House that during the first ten days, registration teams did not operate at full capacity due to delays in the delivery of key equipment. The delay was as a result of the late receipt of key equipment from countries of origin due to lock downs and reduced number of flights. I am glad to report that after receipt of the equipment, phase I of the exercises was implemented at full scale in all the said provinces and was scheduled to end on the 9th of September, 2020.

Madam Speaker, the second phase which was initially scheduled to commence on the 1st September, 2020, had to be postponed to 20th September, 2020. The reason for postponement was to avoid an overlap of phase I into phase II since the same equipment being used under phase I was to be used in phase II of the exercise. Further, to compensate for time lost, under phase one in most districts, the ministry extended the registration period by ten days resulting in phase one ending on the 19th of September, 2020.

Madam Speaker, the issuance of NRCs in phase I progressed well. The NRCs issued under phase I are now being counted and validated and at an appropriate time I will come back to this august House and give final statistics. The House may wish to note that the ministry projected to register a total of 770,000 under phase I of the exercise like I have stated earlier. I wish to appeal through august House and to the nation and indeed to my fellow colleagues in this august House, to urge all eligible citizens to take advantage of the 2020, National Mobile Registration to obtain NRCs.

Madam Speaker, allow me to address some concerns raised by certain sections of society with regard to issuance of NRCs to non-eligible persons. The issuance of NRCs is a right of all eligible citizens in line with the provisions of the National Registration Act Cap. 126 of the Laws of Zambia. All citizens who have attained the age of sixteen and above are entitled to obtain NRC. NRCs are not only for elections, but an identity document used for all services such as

employment, opening of bank accounts, registration as students, among others. However, it is disheartening to note that some sections of society particularly political parties, have been insinuating that non-eligible persons were obtaining NRCs. The law is very clear regarding persons, who are eligible to obtain NRCs and anyone who contravenes the law has to be dealt with accordingly.

Madam Speaker, I urge all those with information on the non-eligible persons, who have fraudulently obtained NRCs to report such individuals to law enforcement agencies immediately. The Government will not allow non-eligible persons to take advantage of the on-going mobile issuance of NRCs exercise to get NRCs. For example, two persons of foreign origin who attempted to obtain NRCs in Mwense District of Luapula Province were arrested and prosecuted and are now serving short sentences after which they will be deported to their countries of origin.

Madam Speaker, in spite of the successes that I have highlighted, some unfortunate incidences were recorded. For example, in some villages in North-Western Province, some sub-chiefs wanted their subjects to register on their NRCs, their chiefdoms even when they were not gazetted, a situation that caused conflicts with gazetted chiefs. In other parts, our officers experienced the challenge of language barriers at the start of the exercise. However, it was quickly resolved as the ministry was able to engage local interpreters.

Going forward, the ministry will always ensure that interpreters are on hand whenever there is a communication barrier. In other incidents, officers were attacked and some equipment and materials were stolen and destroyed. To that effect, some suspects were arrested and charged accordingly and will appear in the courts of law. This is not only unfortunate, but also illegal because officers are citizens who are sent on national duty. Let me make it clear that disrupting the registration process is a criminal offence and law enforcement agencies will always be on hand to arrest the perpetrators. The ministry will ensure that more security officers in the second phase of the exercise are deployed to ensure the safety of officers and Government equipment.

Madam, there were also reported cases of some organisations disrupting the smooth operation of the registration exercise in the name of monitoring. I wish to clarify that monitoring of the

mobile registration exercise is a function of the Government. If stakeholders want to observe the mobile registration exercise, they can do so in consultation with the District Commissioners (DCs) and without interfering with the registration process.

Madam Speaker, regarding the point of order raised yesterday by Hon. Jacob Jack Mwiimbu, Member of Parliament for Monze Constituency, contrary to the insinuations by the hon. Member of Parliament that the exercise has not yet commenced in Monze, the House may wish to note that preliminary statistics indicate that as at 22nd September, 2020, a total of 450 NRCs had been issued in Monze District broken down as follows; 316 first registration and 109 replacements of damaged or lost NRCs. I, therefore, wish to advise the hon. Member to find time to visit his constituency and make time to engage the district commissioner's office.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, let me thank hon. Members of this august House and traditional leaders for encouraging all eligible persons to obtain NRCs. To the general citizenry who visited the registration centres, let me commend you for being co-operative, particularly amidst the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19). I also wish to commend the provincial administrations in all the five provinces for their invaluable support during the exercise. Further, I would be failing in my duties if I did not acknowledge the support in form of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) rendered to our officers and clients by the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) under Her Honour the Vice-President's Office.

Madam Speaker, I finally wish to assure the nation that the national registration offices in all the districts across the country will continue to operate normally even after the end of the 2020 mobile issuance of NRCs. I, therefore, urge all those who missed the mobile registration exercise to visit any nearest national registration office in their respective districts to obtain NRCs.

Madam Speaker, I am sitting on the other side now.

I thank you, Madam.
