

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON
ZAMBIA'S HOSTING OF THE 22nd SUMMIT OF THE HEADS OF STATE AND
GOVERNMENT TO BE HELD ON 8th JUNE, 2023
BY THE
THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE, TRADE AND INDUSTRY (MR C. MULENGA),
MP

Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to deliver this ministerial statement. I want to welcome you and other Colleagues back to the House.

Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to deliver a ministerial statement on the Twenty-Second Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Summit of Heads of State and Government, which will be held at Mulungushi International Conference Centre (MICC), in Lusaka, starting on 8th June, 2023. The Summit will be preceded by the Sixteenth COMESA Business Forum and the Eighteenth Meeting; of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 6th and 7th June, 2023, respectively. The theme of the Summit is, *“Economic Integration for a Thriving COMESA, Anchored on Green Investment, Value Addition and Tourism.”*

Madam Speaker, COMESA is a Free Trade Area (FTA) with twenty-one Member States, formed in December 1994, replacing a Preferential Trade Area (PTA), which had existed since 1981. COMESA was created to serve as an organisation of free independent sovereign States that have agreed to cooperate in developing their natural and human resources for the good of all their people. In this regard, the main focus of COMESA has been on the formation of a large economic and trading unit to overcome trade barriers faced by individual States.

Madam Speaker, the Member States of COMESA are: Burundi, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Seychelles, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Madam Speaker, Article 7 of the COMESA Treaty establishes the organs of the Common Market with the Authority being the highest and consisting of the Heads of State or Government of the Member States. The Authority, which meets as the Summit every year, is the supreme policy organ of the common market and is responsible for the general policy and direction and control of the performance of the executive functions of the Common Market and the achievement of its aims and objectives and shall have such powers as are vested in it under the COMESA Treaty. The Treaty also establishes other organs including the Council of Ministers, the Court of Justice, the Committee of Governors of Central Banks and the Secretariat, which is hosted in Zambia.

Madam Speaker, This is the first time in more than twenty years that Zambia will be hosting the Summit and His Excellency, Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, President of Zambia will be assuming the role of Chairman of the Authority, taking over from His Excellency, Mr. Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

Madam, the size of the COMESA market is a big opportunity for the Zambian business community. Zambia has an approximate population of 19 million people versus a market of over 580 million people in the region. This is a huge opportunity for growth and expansion of business both in terms of commercial presence in twenty other markets in the region and for exports of our products. The Summit is, therefore, a huge opportunity to grow and expand our businesses.

Further, His Excellency, Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia will be steering the Authority in providing policy guidance to reach consensus on a number of issues affecting the region.

Madam Speaker and Colleagues, by hosting of the Summit and the preceding meetings, Government will provide our private sector players an opportunity to establish business linkages through their participation at the Business Forum and enter into deals that will support trade and investment, and ultimately sustainable development and economic growth.

Madam, the hosting of the Meeting will also help towards capital injection into the economy through the hotel, tourism, transport, and communication as well the food and beverages, subsectors. This is very important for our economy as the Government seeks solutions to sustainably overcome the adverse effects of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Madam Speaker, I wish to report that so far, 1,450 delegates have registered for the Ministers of Foreign Affairs Meeting, 1,000 delegates have registered for the COMESA Business Forum and in excess of 2,150 delegates have registered for the COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Government Meeting.

Madam Speaker, I am confident that with the hosting of the Summit, President Hakainde Hichilema assuming the role of Chairperson of the Authority, proceedings at COMESA will be able to move in a manner that promotes regional intra-trade and export of value-added products in line with this year's theme, namely, *Economic Integration for a thriving COMESA, Anchored on Green Investment, Value Addition and Tourism*. The theme depicts the Member States aspirations for the regional economy to rebound from the devastating effects of climate change, global geopolitical effects on trade and the devastating effects of COVID 19 pandemic.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.
