

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON
TRUCKS MAROONED ON KITWE/CHINGOLA DUAL CARRIAGEWAY
BY THE
THE VICE-PRESIDENT (MRS NALUMANGO)

Madam Speaker, I wish to thank you most sincerely for according me this opportunity to present a statement on the trucks marooned on the Kitwe/Chingola Dual Carriageway between Chambeshi and Chingola. The statement is in response to the matter of urgent public importance which was raised by Hon. Kampamba Mulenga, Member of Parliament for Kalulushi Constituency, last week, on Tuesday, 14th February, 2023.

Madam, as the House may recall, the Hon. Madam Speaker directed that a statement be issued by the hon. Minister of Transport and logistics. However, due to the crosscutting nature of the issues raised by the hon. Member, Hon. Madam Speaker, through the Clerk's office, guided that the statement instead be issued by my office.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House and the nation at large that the Government is fully aware of the continued traffic congestion on the Zambian roads leading to the Kasumbalesa Border Post, which has necessitated various meetings between the Zambian authorities and their counterparts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) among border agencies.

Madam Speaker, my Government has held various high-level engagements with the DRC authorities and other stakeholders, aimed at resolving the problem of traffic congestion along the road leading to the Kasumbalesa Border Post. Some of the high-level meetings include the following:

- (a) a meeting was held on Saturday, 11th February 2023, chaired by the Commissioner General of the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) and attended by the Commissioner Customs and all border agencies present at the Kasumbalesa Border, Chililabombwe District Joint Operation Committee (DJOC) and the press.

The objective of this meeting was to identify the main causes of the problem and come up with measures to resolve the problem;

- (b) the hon. Minister for Copperbelt Province and DRC Haut Katanga Governor Jacques Katwe had a meeting, in which the DRC had agreed to extend working hours at the Kasumbalesa Border Post to clear over 2,000 trucks which are marooned on the Zambian side; and
- (c) on the sidelines of the 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU), His Excellency the President, Mr Hakainde Hichilema, held a bilateral meeting with Mr Félix Tshisekedi, His Excellency the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The meeting was centred on resolving the challenges at the Kasumbalesa Border Post.

Madam Speaker, the following are some of the identified causes of the traffic congestion on the Zambian roads leading to the Kasumbalesa Border Post:

- (a) non-adherence to operating hours at the border between ZRA and the DRC customs authorities. Whereas the ZRA works from 0600 hours to 2000 hours, as agreed by the two countries, the Congolese authorities open their side as late as 0700 hours and close as early as 1800 hours;
- (b) the borders that feed traffic into the Kasumbalesa Border, that is, the Chanida, Nakonde, Katima Mulilo, Chirundu and Kazungula, work longer hours, some as late as 2200 hours, which leads to more trucks piling up at Kasumbalesa;
- (c) the rain and wet conditions have reduced the holding capacity of the truck yard at the Kasumbalesa Border to an average of 900 trucks against 1,850 in the dry season. This has mainly contributed to the extent of the highway queue;

- (d) the dilapidated road leading to the border, and mainly at the market, has led to increased breakdowns and the consequent slow traffic movement.; and
- (e) most drivers prefer to pay late exit penalties on the Zambian side, where the security situation is better than on the DRC side and, therefore, do not proceed when it is late.

Madam Speaker, I now wish to inform the House, and the nation at large, on the mitigating measures the Government is taking to address the situation. In the short-term, the following are the measures the Government is taking:

- (a) engagement with the DRC Customs authorities which have continued through various platforms. This is aimed at improving daily output through increased document processing on their side and observance of harmonised border operating hours to allow traffic flow into the DRC;
- (b) multi-stake engagements with a focus on having trucks ready to exit into the DRC accorded this opportunity without parking on the Zambian side by creating a dedicated free-lane for expedient movements;
- (c) drivers are vigorously being engaged and those who have already paid are made to move out of the parking yard;
- (d) the Immigration Department has allowed drivers to move up to the Kasumbalesa border without having to pass through inland offices like Chingola or Kitwe to extend their visas when the seven days transit period expire. They have another option of applying for fourteen days business visas which is more flexible under the current situation. In this regard, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Truck Drivers is engaging its members for publicity;
- (e) patching of the road leading to the boarder is under way and work is going on;

- (f) the House may also wish to note that transit days have been extended to twelve days to ensure clearing agents' accounts are not suspended after the statutory five days. In addition, consignments for credible agents are being facilitated through special release and monitoring system to exit ports;
- (g) the ZRA is reviewing its staffing levels at the board with a view with sending additional staff to improve clearance time; and
- (h) further a combine team of officers from the Road Transport and Safety Agency (RTSA), the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) and the Zambia Police Service (ZP) from Chingola and Chililabombwe has been constituted and is working 24/7 facilitating traffic movements to avoid road blockages and road traffic accidents. This team has also developed a robust communication system which ensures perfect coordination.

Madam Speaker, in order to address the health and sanitation challenges being posed by this situation, the following measures have been taken:

- (a) the Government through the Zambia Army is providing water to the drivers on the queue using water bowsers for the next month starting last week. To this effect, ZRA donated 300 litres of diesel to support this activity while another 75 litres of fuel per week has been pledged by a private company to support water distribution;
- (b) ten units mobile toilets were secured and have since been delivered for use on-site and the Government is making frantic effort to secure more toilets on the affect stretch. The construction of toilet facilities is being considered by the joint team of ZRA and the Zambia National Service ZNS currently on site at the Kasumbalesa;

- (k) the Ministry of Health is scaling up sensitisation activities in order to prevent both notifiable and communicable diseases such as Cholera and HIV/AIDS among others.

Madam Speaker, in the medium to long-term, the Government is taking the following measures:

- (a) process harmonisation – the National Trade Facilitating Committee (NTFC) under the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry will merge and harmonise pay points for charges and fees into a single paying point using the Zambia Electronic Single Window (ZESW) by June 2023. Further, the Government will engage with its DRC counterparts and facilitate implementation of 24-hour operations on key shared borders with the DRC at Kasumbalesa, Sakania, Mukambo, Kipushi and Chembe where currently border operating hours are mainly limited from 06 00 am to 18 00 hours;
- (b) Security – the Joint Permanent Commission (JPC) between Zambia and the DRC will need to address the security concerns that have been persistently raised by drivers over the years;
- (c) parking yard and related facilities – following the impending takeover of traffic management from the concessionaire on 3rd March 2023, the ZRA has budgeted for the construction of a modern all-weather parking yard with a holding capacity of 2,000 trucks accompanied by sanitary and kitchen facilities for the drivers by December, 2023; and
- (d) Road infrastructure to alternative Border – Government will expedite the construction/rehabilitation of the roads leading to Kipushi, Mokambo and Sakania borders as these are alternative routes to DRC. However, the current state renders them impassable in the rain season.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House and the nation at large that the interventions and efforts being implemented by Government and various stakeholders have since

seen the queue significantly reducing in the past week from Kalulushi Road to Chambishi. It is therefore, our hope that these efforts will eventually help bring sanity and normalcy to the motorist and communities in the affected towns of Kalulushi Cosntituency and other constituencies along the road.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.
