

MINISTERIALS STATEMENT
ON THE
STRAY LIONS TERRORISING CHIBALE CHIEFDOM
BY THE
MINISTER OF TOURISM (MR SIKUMBA), MP

Madam Speaker, I rise to deliver a ministerial statement, on the reports of stray lions that have reportedly been terrorising the people of Chibale Chiefdom of Chama North Parliamentary Constituency in the Eastern Province. This is in response to the matter of urgent public importance raised by the hon. Member of Chama North Constituency. I am grateful for the opportunity to make clarifications on the issues raised, and allay the fears of the people in the affected area.

Madam Speaker, you may wish to recall that I did present to this august House on 21st July, 2023 and prior to that, on 9th June, 2023, ministerial statements on the human-wildlife conflict situation in Zambia as a whole and remedial measures being undertaken to mitigate the scourge. I did highlight to the House that human-wildlife conflicts have become a matter of concern lately and seem to be on the increase in comparison to the situation in the previous years.

Madam Speaker, I wish to reiterate that the increase in human-wildlife conflicts, which are currently being experienced, could largely be attributed to the expansion of human settlements into protected areas through encroachment, blockage of wildlife corridors, and introduction of livestock in Game Management Areas (GMAs).

Madam Speaker, Chama Constituency lies in the Musalangu Game Management Area, which is an important wildlife migration route connecting the Vwaza Marsh National Park in Malawi and the North Luangwa National Park in Zambia. As the hon. Members of this august House may be aware, this area is an integral part of the Malawi-Zambia Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA).

Madam Speaker, TFCAs are part of the Government's efforts to promote tourism in the country and the region, where management of wildlife is done at a transboundary level in conjunction with neighbouring countries.

Madam Speaker, this House may wish to note that the increased interventions in law enforcement in the Zambia-Malawi TFCA has led to a steady increase of wildlife in Chama and surrounding areas since the inception of the TFCA in 2003.

Madam Speaker, I wish to confirm that the report of stray lions in Chibale Chiefdom was received by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) in the Ministry of Tourism on 14th September, 2023 in Chama from the area Member of Parliament, Hon. Yotam Mtayachalo. Even as the report was being made, the ministry had already initiated the process of deploying wildlife police officers from the Chama office to Chibale Chiefdom. In this regard, the Ministry of Tourism, through the DNPW, will continue to work with the community in Chibale. We urge the Chibale community, through the area hon. Member of Parliament, to support this operation whenever we reach out to them.

Madam Speaker, communities living near wildlife-protected areas will always face the risk of exposure to conflict with wildlife as alluded to in the previous ministerial statements concerning human-wildlife conflicts. However, our aim as a ministry and as the Government, is to reduce the scale and frequency of occurrences of human-wildlife conflicts so as to safeguard the lives of people and property through undertakings of various prevention measures, which include but not limited to:

- (a) the development and implementation of General Management Plans (GMPs);
- (b) preventing trespassing and encroachments in protected areas;
- (c) restraining animals from moving into certain areas to prevent conflicts by using a variety of methods such as chili blasting, watch towers, electric fences; and
- (d) enhancing sensitisation of communities living around animal habitats on the threats posed by animals.

Madam Speaker, on their part, communities need to desist from encroaching on protected areas. This is because experience has demonstrated that the increase in illegal settlements in protected areas is the major contributor to human-wildlife conflicts.

Madam Speaker, as I conclude, I wish to make an earnest appeal to my brother, the area hon. Member of Parliament and all other hon. Members of Parliament in GMAs, to support the efforts being made by the ministry through the DNPW, by urging members of the public in the various constituencies to work hand in hand with my department to create a safer living environment, co-existing.

I wish to assure the people of Chama North Constituency that the Government has committed to ensuring the safety of its people. It is our hope that the area hon. Member of Parliament, in collaboration with the district administration, will lead the process of reconciling between the community and officers from the DNPW to ensure that no lives or property are lost in Chibale due to human-wildlife conflicts.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.
