

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON

CLEARANCE OF TRUCKS LADEN WITH MUKULA LOGS IN TRANSIT FROM
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

BY

THE HON. MINISTER OF LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES, MS KAPATA, MP

Madam Speaker, I wish to thank you for according me this opportunity to deliver a ministerial statement to this august House and the nation at large on the clearance of trucks laden with mukula logs in transit from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Madam, the Government of the Republic of Zambia issued Statutory Instrument (SI) No. 96 of 2018 and it was amended by Statutory Instrument No. 8 of 2019. Further, it was amended by Statutory Instrument No. 58 of 2019 The Control of Goods (Import and Export) (Forest Produce). The SI authorised the Government of the DRC to transit 3,400 40 foot containers through Zambia laden with mukula logs for a period of six months with effect from 28th December, 2018.

Madam Speaker, the transiting of the mukula logs only took effect in April, 2019 and is currently ongoing. The sub-committee of the Central Joint Operations Committee (CJCO) on mukula has been facilitating the inspection and escort of the consignments. Further, the sub-committee has so far facilitated the inspection and escort of 455 trucks laden with mukula logs in transit through Zambia from the DRC. This exercise was undertaken between April and August, 2019. The exercise was administratively extended beyond the 28th June, 2019, to allow for the transiting of all the trucks, whose payments were already made to the Zambian Government before 28th June, 2019.

Madam, I must be quick to mention that out of the 455 trucks containers that have been paid for, 361 trucks have transited through Zambia. However, three trucks did not exit the country due to

various reasons such as breakdowns and servicing of the trucks while ninety-one trucks are still on the DRC side awaiting clearance.

Madam, I wish to inform this august House that the Government of the Republic of Zambia is collecting revenue through the inspection and escort fees at rates of K2,400 and K2,000 per container respectively. A total amount of K1,187,400 has so far been collected for inspection of the 455 trucks. The Government of the DRC has also paid K915,200 to meet the cost of escorting the 455 trucks. This brings the total amount collected so far for the 455 trucks to K2,102,600.

Madam Speaker, therefore, I wish to let this august Hose know that out of the 3,400 containers laden with mukula logs from the DRC meant to transit through Zambia, a total of 361 trucks have exited the country.

Madam Speaker, there are challenges being encountered during the implementation of this exercise. I must mention that the Government of the DRC has not been able to implement the exercise as projected by the Zambian Government. The agreed plan was to have a minimum of sixty trucks transiting per day. However, at the beginning of the exercise, the average numbers that were transiting was twenty trucks per consignment. The number only increased to forty trucks per consignment upon inclusion of Nakonde Border as a port of exit to others like Chirundu, Kazungula and Katima Mulilo.

Madam, some notable challenges are as follows:

- (a) tedious processes in obtaining export permits in the DRC;
- (b) time required to complete the process of clearing the consignment from the time the trucks reach the border;
- (c) procedural delays between the clearing agents, Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) officials and the private company managing the Kasumbalesa One Stop Border;

- (d) lack of experience by some of the customs clearing agents for handling such huge consignment, hence delaying the clearing process; and
- (e) insufficient reliable trucks transiting through Chirundu, Kazungula and Katima Mulilo Borders, as most of those trucks available in the DRC were Tanzanian trucks.

Madam Speaker, following the challenges that the technical committee and escort teams from the provinces encountered, the Zambian Government will review the terms and conditions agreed with the Government of the DRC.

Madam Speaker, my ministry is considering the following:

- (a) The inspection and escort teams should move only when a minimum of sixty trucks are at Kasumbalesa; and
- (b) The Government of the DRC will be encouraged to follow the recommended axle load by the Road Development Agency (RDA) to avoid overloading and, thereby causing delays in the estimated time of escorts from the point of entry to the point of exit.

Madam Speaker, in my conclusion, I wish to state that the operations have not been implemented as agreed with the Government of the DRC. Therefore, a delegation from the DRC has been invited to come and agree on the revised terms and conditions of implementing this operation.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.