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**DRAFT OPENING STATEMENT FOR  
HON. STANLEY K. KAKUBO, MP,  
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL  
COOPERATION  
GUEST OF HONOUR AT THE COMESA MEETING OF MINISTERS OF  
JUSTICE AND ATTORNEYS GENERAL**

**COMESA HEADQUARTERS**

**LUSAKA**

**22 SEPTEMBER 2023**

- HONOURABLE MULAMBO HAIMBE, M.P., MINISTER OF JUSTICE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA,
- HONOURABLE MINISTERS OF JUSTICE FROM COMESA MEMBER STATES,
- HER EXCELLENCY, MS. CHILESHE MPUNDU KAPWEPWE, SECRETARY GENERAL OF COMESA,
- JUSTICE LOMBE CHIBESAKUNDA, JUDGE PRESIDENT OF THE COMESA COURT OF JUSTICE,
- YOUR EXCELLENCIES, AMBASSADORS, HIGH COMMISSIONERS AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES ACCREDITED TO COMESA,
- MEMBERS OF THE PRESS,
- DISTINGUISHED INVITED GUESTS,
- LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

I AM DELIGHTED AND HONOURED TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO OFFICIATE AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING OF THE COMESA MINISTERS OF JUSTICE AND ATTORNEYS GENERAL MEETING HERE TODAY.

ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA AND ON MY OWN BEHALF I WELCOME YOU ALL TO

ZAMBIA AND TO THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA.

I WISH TO THANK EACH ONE OF YOU FOR HAVING TAKEN TIME OFF YOUR BUSY SCHEDULES AND NATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS TO ATTEND THIS IMPORTANT MEETING. YOUR ATTENDANCE IS A CLEAR AFFIRMATION OF YOUR UNWAVERING SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT TO COMESA AND HER PROGRAMME OF INTEGRATING THE COMESA REGION.

**HONOURABLE MINISTERS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN PERFORMED BY COMESA MINISTERS OF JUSTICE IS VERY IMPORTANT AND KEY TO THE REALISATION OF THE IDEALS OF INTEGRATING THE COMESA REGION. YOUR MEETING IS THE CORNERSTONE FOR DEVELOPING LEGISLATION FOR THE COMMON MARKET. THE HISTORICAL GAINS IN REGIONAL TRADE AND INVESTMENT THAT COMESA HAS RECORDED THROUGH YOUR CONCERTED EFFORTS, DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPING COMMUNITY LEGISLATION ARE UNPARALLELED.



TODAY, COMESA MEMBER STATES ARE ENJOYING THE FRUITS OF THAT UNWAVERING SUPPORT EXTENDED BY YOU TO THE REGION. OVER THE YEARS, YOUR MEETINGS HAVE CONSIDERED AND APPROVED KEY LEGAL INSTRUMENTS THAT HAVE FACILITATED HARMONIZATION OF TRADE ACTIVITY, FACILITATED THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMESA DIGITAL FREE TRADE AREA, AMONGST OTHER THINGS. IT IS FOR THAT REASON THAT I EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION FOR THE FINE WORK THAT YOU DO. I, THEREFORE, WISH TO ENCOURAGE YOU TO CONTINUE WITH THE SAME SPIRIT.

**HONOURABLE MINISTERS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

I HAVE HAD SIGHT OF THE DRAFT AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK FOR YOUR MEETING AND NOTE THAT, AMONG OTHERS, THE MEETING WILL BE RECEIVING A REPORT OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS WHICH CONSIDERED DRAFT LEGAL INSTRUMENTS OF THE COMESA COMPETITION COMMISSION AND THE COMESA REGIONAL INVESTMENT AGENCY.

THE COMESA COMPETITION COMMISSION'S ROLE IS CRITICAL IN ENSURING THAT IN TRADE ACTIVITIES, THERE IS FAIRNESS AND

CONSUMER PROTECTION. THE COMESA REGIONAL INVESTMENT AGENCY'S ROLE IS EQUALLY ESSENTIAL IN ATTRACTING INVESTMENT INTO THE COMESA REGION. IT IS ONLY THROUGH FACILITATING TRADE AND INVESTMENT THAT THE COMESA REGION WILL ATTAIN THE GOAL OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND ENSURE PROSPERITY FOR ALL COMESA CITIZENS.

FURTHER, YOUR MEETING WILL BE RECEIVING A PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE COMESA COURT OF JUSTICE WHOSE ROLE IS ENSURING AN ADHERENCE TO LAW IN THE INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF THE COMESA TREATY. THIS ROLE IS IMPORTANT IN ENSURING THE SPEEDY SETTLEMENT OF TRADE DISPUTES AMONG MEMBER STATES TO ALLOW CONTINUED SMOOTH FLOW OF BUSINESS AT ALL TIMES.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT UNDER THE STEADY GUIDANCE OF YOUR BUREAU, YOUR MEETING WILL BE ABLE TO EXPEDITIOUSLY CONSIDER AND RECOMMEND THE VARIOUS DRAFT LEGISLATION FOR APPROVAL BY COUNCIL AS YOU HAVE SO ABLY DONE IN THE PAST.

**HONOURABLE MINISTERS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

COMESA HAS OVER THE YEARS PASSED NUMEROUS LEGAL INSTRUMENTS AND PROTOCOLS. REGRETTABLY SOME OF THEM HAVE NOT YET BEEN DOMESTICATED AT NATIONAL LEVEL BY MEMBER STATES TO ALLOW FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMITMENTS. FOR INSTANCE, THE RATIFICATION OF THE COMESA-EAC-SADC TRIPARTITE FREE TRADE AREA AGREEMENT WHICH, I AM RELIABLY INFORMED, IS JUST SHORT OF THREE INSTRUMENTS OF RATIFICATION FOR IT TO COME INTO FORCE.

THE SLOWED SIGNING AND RATIFICATION OF LEGAL INSTRUMENTS IS UNFORTUNATELY HAMPERING EFFORTS TO ADVANCE THE PROGRAMME OF INTEGRATING THE COMESA REGION AS THIS PREVENTS MEMBER STATES FROM UNLOCKING BENEFITS EMBEDDED IN THESE LEGAL INSTRUMENTS.

IN THAT REGARD, I WOULD LIKE TO CALL UPON ALL COMESA MEMBER STATES TO ENSURE THAT COMESA LEGAL INSTRUMENTS AND DECISIONS ARE DOMESTICATED AT NATIONAL LEVEL. WE CAN ONLY SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT COMESA PROGRAMMES ONCE WE ALL DOMESTICATE COMESA INSTRUMENTS AT NATIONAL LEVEL.



IN THAT LIGHT, I WISH TO APPEAL TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL TO CONTINUE ENGAGING MEMBER STATES AND MAKING FOLLOW UPS ON THE PENDING RATIFICATIONS OF COMESA LEGAL INSTRUMENTS.

**HONOURABLE MINISTERS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

AS I CONCLUDE, LET ME REITERATE ZAMBIA'S COMMITMENT TO CONTINUE PURSUING THE IDEALS AND COMMON INTERESTS OF THE COMESA REGION. DURING OUR TENURE AS CHAIR, WE SHALL CONTINUE WORKING CLOSELY WITH ALL MEMBER STATES TO DRIVE THE COMESA INTEGRATION AGENDA FORWARD FOR THE COMMON GOOD OF ALL CITIZENS OF THIS COMMUNITY.

MAY I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS MY SINCERE GRATITUDE TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL AND HER TEAM FOR ORGANIZING THIS IMPORTANT MEETING. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT, WITH THE EXCELLENT ORGANIZATION OF WORK BEFORE YOU, YOUR DELIBERATIONS WILL YIELD CONCRETE DECISIONS THAT SHALL BE TAKEN AND IMPLEMENTED FULLY. I, THEREFORE, LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING A POSITIVE REPORT OF THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES OF YOUR MEETING.

AS YOU EMBARK ON YOUR DELIBERATIONS, PLEASE ALSO FIND TIME TO EXPLORE THE TOURISTIC DELIGHTS ON OFFER IN OUR CITY, LUSAKA, AND SAMPLE THE REAL ZAMBIAN HOSPITALITY.

**I THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR ATTENTION AND DECLARE THIS MEETING OFFICIALLY OPEN!**