



**REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA**

**STATEMENT BY**

**HER HONOUR THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
ZAMBIA MRS. W. K. MUTALE-NALUMANGO, MP**

**DURING THE**

**COMESA COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING  
HELD ON 1ST DECEMBER, 2022**

CABINET OFFICE

LUSAKA

NOVEMBER, 2022

- **YOUR EXCELLENCES;**
- **HONOURABLE MINISTERS;**
- **RESPECTIVE HEADS OF DELEGATIONS;**
- **REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS;**
- **YOUR EXCELLENCES, AMBASSADORS AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES TO COMESA;**
- **YOUR EXCELLENCES, AMBASSADORS AND SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES TO COMESA;**
- **YOUR EXCELLENCY MADAM CHILESHE MPUNDU KAPWEPWE, SECRETARY GENERAL OF COMESA AND ASSISTANT SECRETARIES GENERAL OF COMESA;**
- **CHIEF EXECUTIVES AND HEADS OF COMESA INSTITUTIONS;**
- **DISTINGUISHED INVITED GUESTS;**
- **MEMBERS OF THE ELECTRONIC AND PRINT MEDIA;**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**

ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA, HIS EXCELLENCY MR. HAKAINDE HICHILEMA, ALLOW ME TO CONVEY TO YOU ALL MY HEARTFELT WELCOME TO ZAMBIA AND TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK YOU ALL FOR TAKING TIME TO ATTEND THIS IMPORTANT MEETING. I HOPE YOU TAKE SOME TIME OFF TO ENJOY THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF OUR BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY.

THE COMESA COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, AS AN IMPORTANT ORGAN OF THE COMMON MARKET, HAS AN IMPORTANT FUNCTION TO AMONG OTHERS, MONITOR AND KEEP UNDER CONSTANT REVIEW, THE

PROPER FUNCTIONING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMON MARKET. THE IMPORTANCE OF TODAY'S MEETING, THEREFORE, CANNOT BE OVEREMPHASISED AS COMESA CONTINUES TO IMPLEMENT REGIONAL PROGRAMMES UNDER THE THEME – ***"BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH STRATEGIC DIGITAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION."***

**HON. MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

ALLOW ME TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COMMEND THE COMESA SECRETARIAT, UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL, FOR ITS CONTINUED SERVICE IN ACTING AS THE FACILITATOR, AND COORDINATOR OF INTEGRATION PROGRAMMES. FACILITATED BY THE SECRETARIAT AND ITS INSTITUTIONS, COMESA HAS CONTINUED TO CONTRIBUTE TO REGIONAL AND CONTINENTAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA. NOW MORE THAN EVER, AS THE WORLD RECOVERS FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WHOSE NEGATIVE EFFECTS WERE FELT IN EVERY SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY, THERE IS NEED TO WORK TOWARDS BUILDING RESILIENCE OF OUR ECONOMIES.

YOU WILL AGREE WITH ME THAT, THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH WE ARE OPERATING, IS CHARACTERISED BY SURGING COMMODITY PRICES OWING TO DISRUPTION OF GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS, TIGHTENING OF GLOBAL FINANCIAL CONDITIONS, AND HEIGHTENED MARKET VOLATILITY ASSOCIATED WITH THE CURRENT ARMED CONFLICT IN EUROPE. THESE DEVELOPMENTS HAVE PLACED SEVERE FISCAL AND EXCHANGE RATE PRESSURE ACROSS MANY COUNTRIES IN THE REGION. ADDITIONALLY, THE REGION IS

GRAPPLING WITH THE ADVERSE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE WHICH CANNOT BE IGNORED. THESE CHALLENGES POSE A RISK TO THE GAINS THAT THE REGION HAS MADE SO FAR AND POSE A SIGNIFICANT RISK TO FOOD SECURITY.

GOING FORWARD, THERE WILL BE NEED FOR THE REGION TO PRIORITIZE AND FOCUS ON KEY AREAS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC GROWTH INCLUDING TRADE AND TRANSIT FACILITATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERVENTIONS THAT PROMOTE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONALLY INTEGRATED, DIVERSIFIED AND COMPETITIVE PRODUCTION CAPACITY ANCHORED ON AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND SERVICES SECTORS. PRIORITISATION SHOULD ALSO BE BASED ON VALUE ADDITION, DIVERSIFICATION, INNOVATION AND COMMON REGIONAL STANDARDS, ALL WITH DUE CONSIDERATION TO PROTECTION OF OUR ENVIRONMENT.

ADDITIONALLY, THESE EFFORTS MUST BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF INCLUSIVENESS, PARTICIPATION, AND SUSTAINABILITY TO ENSURE THAT ALL SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY INCLUDING WOMEN, YOUTH AND THE VULNERABLE, ARE SUPPORTED TO HAVE ACCESS AND CONTROL OVER RESOURCES THAT HAVE A CLEARLY VISIBLE IMPACT ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

**HON. MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

ALLOW ME TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COMMEND THE VARIOUS DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS SOME OF WHOM ARE PRESENT HERE TODAY, FOR THEIR INVALUABLE SUPPORT TO COMESA'S INTEGRATION AGENDA OVER THE YEARS. YOU WILL AGREE WITH ME

THAT FOR THE SUPPORT TO REMAIN MEANINGFUL AND SUSTAINABLE, THERE WILL BE NEED TO ADHERE TO THE PRINCIPLES OF AID EFFECTIVENESS. THIS WILL BE UNDERTAKEN THROUGH ACTIVELY PROMOTING NATIONAL OWNERSHIP OF DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS, ALIGNMENT OF PRIORITIES, AND MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY AMONGST OTHERS WITH A FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY AND ULTIMATELY SELF RELIANCE.

**HON. MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

ALLOW ME TO HIGHLIGHT SOME KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF COMESA IN ITS CONTINUED EFFORTS TO FACILITATE REGIONAL INTEGRATION. GUIDED BY THE 2021-2025 MEDIUM TERM STRATEGIC PLAN, EFFORTS TO CONSOLIDATE AND STRENGTHEN THE COMESA FREE TRADE AREA HAVE CONTINUED. THE IMMENSE POTENTIAL OF THE COMESA FREE TRADE AREA CANNOT BE OVEREMPHASISED. IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED THEIR INTRA-REGIONAL TRADE, AS A SHARE OF THEIR TOTAL TRADE, AS SHOWN BY THE RATIO OF INTRA-COMESA TRADE TO GLOBAL TRADE, DESPITE DISRUPTIONS CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC WHICH AMONGST OTHERS DISRUPTED GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS.

STRENGTHENING OF THE FREE TRADE AREA, SUPPORTED BY DIGITAL INSTRUMENTS WHICH INCLUDE AMONGST OTHERS, USE OF THE ONLINE NON-TARIFF BARRIERS SYSTEM, AND THE COMESA ELECTRONIC CERTIFICATE OF ORIGIN - BEING PILOTED UNDER THE COMESA'S TRADE FACILITATION PROGRAMMES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SMALL-SCALE CROSS BORDER TRADE

INITIATIVE WITH A STRONG ELEMENT OF STATISTICS GENERATION, HAS CONTINUED TO PROMOTE MARKET INTEGRATION WITH THE VIEW OF FACILITATING THE SMOOTH FLOW OF GOODS, PERSONS AND SERVICES ACROSS THE REGION'S BORDERS.

**HON. MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

WELL DEVELOPED TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO REGIONAL INTEGRATION. THEREFORE, THE COMESA TRANSPORT POLICY PROVIDES A FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL AND NATIONAL POLICIES. IN THIS CONTEXT, COMESA HAS CONTINUED TO SUPPORT REGIONAL PHYSICAL CONNECTIVITY AND FACILITATION OF SMOOTH PROVISION OF TRANSPORT SERVICES PREMISED ON REGIONALLY AGREED REGULATORY, ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT BASED ON THE CORRIDOR FRAMEWORK.

IT IS HOPED THAT, CONTINUED IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMMES INCLUDING AMONGST OTHERS, STRENGTHENING OF CORRIDOR GOVERNANCE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT, THROUGH UTILISATION OF DIGITAL INSTRUMENTS, ONE STOP BORDER POSTS, AND FACILITATING IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSPORT TRANSIT INSTRUMENTS BY MEMBER STATES, WILL ADEQUATELY ADDRESS SUPPLY SIDE CONSTRAINTS TO THE INTEGRATION AGENDA AND FACILITATE INCREASED INTRA-REGIONAL TRADE.

**HON. MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

IN AN EFFORT TO CONTRIBUTE TO PRODUCTIVE INTEGRATION, COMESA GUIDED BY ITS INDUSTRIALISATION STRATEGY, HAS CONTINUED TO IMPLEMENT VARIOUS PROGRAMMES FOCUSED ON INCLUSIVE INDUSTRIALIZATION, PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT WITH AN EMPHASIS ON BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES, INVESTMENT PROMOTION AND AGRICULTURE COVERING PLANT, LIVESTOCK, FISHERIES, AND RELATED ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF THE COMPREHENSIVE AFRICAN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME. THIS IS AIMED TO BOOST AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND PRODUCTION IN THE REGION. ADDITIONAL PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES ALSO AIMED AT IMPROVING ACCESS TO MARKETS FOCUSED ON SANITARY AND PHYTO SANITARY AND STANDARDS ARE ALSO BEING IMPLEMENTED.

MOVING FORWARD, IT WILL BE IMPORTANT, THEREFORE, TO LEVERAGE ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA TO STRENGTHEN VALUE-ADDITION AND INDUSTRIAL GROWTH, AND TO INCREASE DIGITIZATION TO CONTINUE TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE ECONOMIES OF THE REGION.

**HON. MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

KEEPING IN LINE WITH THE **UN AGENDA 2030** AND **AU AGENDA 2063** WITH THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE OF LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND, GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT ARE KEY ELEMENTS TO ACHIEVING PROGRESS IN ALL AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT IN OUR REGION.

I AM HAPPY TO NOTE THAT COMESA HAS CONTINUED TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION THROUGH INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT GENDER MAINSTREAMING, EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN, YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, AND ADDRESSING SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT TO ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT. ALLOW ME TO COMMEND THE SECRETARIAT FOR HOSTING THE FIRST TECHNICAL AND MINISTERIAL MEETINGS ON HEALTH WHICH PASSED IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROMOTE HEALTH MATTERS IN THE REGION.

**HON. MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

IN EFFORTS TO ENHANCE ITS EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMEND THE SECRETARIAT FOR EMBARKING ON A PROCESS TO AUTOMATE CORE PROCESSES WITH THE AIM TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND WORKFLOWS AND INTEGRATE INFORMATION ACROSS CORE PROCESSES. IT IS HOPED THAT THESE IMPROVEMENTS WILL ENABLE THE SECRETARIAT TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL SERVICES TO COMESA IN AN EFFICIENT MANNER. THIS ACTION EXEMPLIFIES AN ORGANISATION THAT IS ABLE TO LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE AND INCORPORATE BEST PRACTICES TO REMAIN FIT FOR PURPOSE.

**HON. MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

ALLOW ME TO PROVIDE A HIGHLIGHT ABOUT THE NEW DAWN GOVERNMENT. THE GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBIA IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING MACROECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL STABILITY. IT IS



WELL KNOWN THAT MACROECONOMIC STABILITY ENABLES AND PROMOTES PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT AND SUPPORTS INCLUSIVE GROWTH. THE GOVERNMENT, IN ADDITION, IS COMMITTED TO CREATION OF A CONDUCTIVE LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ENVIRONMENT THAT IS FRIENDLY TO BUSINESS, EDUCATING AND BUILDING SKILLS FOR OUR CITIZENS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND KEEPING THEM HEALTHY.

THE NEW DAWN GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES THAT ATTRACT AND SECURE INVESTMENT IN SECTORS THAT DRIVE GROWTH OF OUR ECONOMY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PEOPLE. THESE SECTORS INCLUDE AGRICULTURE, MINING, TOURISM, AND MANUFACTURING AMONG OTHERS.

FURTHER, THE GOVERNMENT SHALL STRIVE TO ENSURE THAT ALL REGIONAL INTEGRATION POLICIES AND STRATEGIES ARE ADHERED TO, IN ORDER TO ENHANCE TRADE BETWEEN AND AMONG MEMBER STATES OF COMESA AND THE AFRICAN CONTINENT AT LARGE.

THE BROAD THEMATIC AREAS OF FOCUS FOR ZAMBIA, AS ESPOUSED IN THE 8TH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN ARE: ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AND JOB CREATION; INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT; HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT; ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY; AND GOOD GOVERNANCE ENVIRONMENT.

BE REST ASSURED THAT AS THE HOST OF THE SECRETARIAT, THE GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBIA WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SUPPORT FOR THE EFFECTIVE RUNNING OF THE SECRETARIAT.

**HON. MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

TURNING BACK TO MATTERS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION, YOU WILL AGREE WITH ME THAT COMESA PROGRAMMES HAVE DEMONSTRATED THE CAPACITY AND IMMENSE POTENTIAL TO ADDRESS THE CURRENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES. COMESA, THEREFORE, REQUIRES ALL OF THE SUPPORT OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO UNDERTAKE THEIR RESPECTIVE ROLES IF INDEED OUR OBJECTIVES ARE TO BE ACHIEVED AND BENEFITS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION TRICKLE DOWN TO ALL SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY.

I AM HOPEFUL THAT TODAY'S MEETING WILL PROVIDE THE DIRECTION REQUIRED TO ENSURE THE CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT OF OUR REGION.

**AS I CONCLUDE MY STATEMENT, I WISH TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION AND WISH YOU SUCCESSFUL DELIBERATIONS.**