



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

STATEMENT

BY

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

**DURING THE 44TH MEETING OF COMESA COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS**

**OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT
LUSAKA**

NOVEMBER, 2023

- **THE CHAIRPERSON;**
- **HON. MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL;**
- **HON. JUDGE PRESIDENT OF THE COMESA COURT OF JUSTICE;**
- **CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMESA COMMITTEE OF CENTRAL BANK GOVERNORS;**
- **SECRETARY GENERAL OF COMESA;**
- **HEADS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS;**
- **EXCELLENCIES, AMBASSADORS, PERMANENT AND SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES TO COMESA;**
- **CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF COMESA INSTITUTIONS;**
- **INVITED GUESTS;**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**

ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA, I EXTEND A HEARTFELT WELCOME TO YOU ALL TO ZAMBIA.

MR. CHAIRPERSON,

YOUR COUNCIL PROVIDES EFFECTIVE POLICY AND STRATEGIC GUIDANCE TO COMESA IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENDA OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION, WHICH IS HIGHLY APPRECIATED.

HONOURABLE MINISTERS, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,

I WISH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONGRATULATE THE SECRETARIAT, UNDER THE ABLE LEADERSHIP OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL, MADAM CHILESHE MPUNDU KAPWEPWE, FOR HAVING

DELIVERED A SUCCESSFUL SUMMIT IN LUSAKA ON 8TH JUNE, 2023. THIS SUMMIT PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBER STATES TO REFLECT ON A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT ISSUES, INCLUDING THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES MEMBER STATES ARE FACING.

AT THE END, THE SUMMIT ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE WHICH SIGNALLED THE POLICY DIRECTION THAT THE ORGANIZATION NEEDS TO FOLLOW. ONE OF THE IMPORTANT PRONOUNCEMENTS MADE BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AUTHORITY WAS AN APPRECIATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ONE STOP BORDER FACILITIES IN MEMBER STATES. THE CHAIRPERSON, HOWEVER, CHALLENGED THE ORGANIZATION TO GO FURTHER AND AIM AT NO STOP BORDER POSTS IN SUPPORT OF DELIVERING A BORDERLESS COMESA REGION. I HOPE WE ARE FARING WELL ON THIS CHARTED WAY FORWARD.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, THE RUSSIA – UKRAINE WAR AND OTHER REGIONAL CONFLICTS HAVE CAUSED A SURGE IN GLOBAL OIL AND FUEL PRICES, FOOD ITEMS AND AGRICULTURAL INPUTS, WHICH HAS HAD A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON BASIC COMMODITY PRICES OWING TO DISRUPTION OF GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS, TIGHTENING OF GLOBAL FINANCIAL CONDITIONS AND HEIGHTENED MARKET VOLATILITY.

THESE DEVELOPMENTS HAVE PLACED SEVERE FISCAL AND EXCHANGE RATE PRESSURES ACROSS MANY COUNTRIES IN THE COMESA REGION. FURTHER, THE REGION IS GRAPPLING WITH THE ADVERSE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE WHICH CANNOT BE IGNORED, AS AFRICA IS THE MOST AFFECTED REGION. THESE CHALLENGES POSE

RISKS TO THE GAINS THAT THE REGION HAS MADE IN REDUCING POVERTY AND IMPROVING THE STANDARDS OF LIVING OF OUR PEOPLE.

THIS, THEREFORE, UNDERSCORES THE NEED FOR THE REGION TO PRIORITIZE AND REFOCUS ON KEY AREAS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTIVITY AND COMPETITIVENESS. PRIORITIZATION SHOULD BE BASED ON VALUE ADDITION, DIVERSIFICATION AND EMBRACING NEW TECHNOLOGIES, ALL WITH DUE CONSIDERATION TO THE PROTECTION OF OUR ENVIRONMENT. ADDITIONALLY, WE SHOULD ENSURE THAT ALL SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY INCLUDING WOMEN, YOUTH AND THE VULNERABLE ARE ADEQUATELY SUPPORTED.

HONOURABLE MINISTERS,

DESPITE OUR COUNTRIES BEING ENDOWED WITH VAST NATURAL RESOURCES, INCLUDING MINERALS, AGRICULTURAL LAND AND ATTRACTIVE SITES, OUR PEOPLE REMAIN POOR AND VULNERABLE TO VARIOUS ECONOMIC SHOCKS. THIS IS ONE MORE REASON WHY WE SHOULD JOIN HANDS TO FORGE AHEAD WITH OUR REGIONAL INTEGRATION AGENDA, WHICH OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES TO ADD VALUE AND ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY, GENERATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND INCREASE HOUSEHOLD INCOME EARNINGS. IT ALSO STIMULATES GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES.

AS WE MOVE FORWARD, IT IS IMPORTANT TO LEVERAGE ON THE OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED UNDER THE COMESA-EAC-SADC

TRIPARTITE FREE TRADE AREA AND THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA. THESE, NOT ONLY WIDEN MARKETS FOR OUR GOODS AND SERVICES, BUT ALSO STRENGTHEN VALUE-ADDITION AND INDUSTRIAL GROWTH AND STIMULATE LONG TERM INVESTMENTS IN PHYSICAL AND SOFT INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT. TO REAP THESE BENEFITS, WE NEED TO IMPROVE THE CONNECTIVITY OF OUR COUNTRIES THROUGH GOOD ROADS, RAILWAYS AND MARITIME TRANSPORT MEANS, AMONG OTHERS. WE ALSO NEED TO UNLEASH THE FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE TO OPEN WIDER AVENUES OF REGIONAL TRADE, INVESTMENT AND INTEGRATION.

CHAIRPERSON,

I WISH TO COMMEND THE SECRETARIAT FOR EMBARKING ON A PROCESS OF AUTOMATING CORE PROCESSES WITH THE AIM OF IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND WORKFLOWS. AUTOMATION AND DIGITALIZATION ARE ESSENTIAL IN OUR WORLD TODAY AND WILL ENABLE THE SECRETARIAT TO PROVIDE MORE SUPPORT TO MEMBER STATES IN AN EFFICIENT MANNER.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

AS I CONCLUDE, I WISH TO APPRECIATE THE GOOD WORKS OF OUR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS WHO HAVE REMAINED COMMITTED TO COMESA AND HER PROGRAMMES OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION. WE DO NOT TAKE THIS COMMITMENT FOR GRANTED. I ENCOURAGE YOU TO FURTHER NURTURE THESE PARTNERSHIPS IN THE INTEREST OF OUR REGION, THE CONTINENT AND THE WORLD AS A WHOLE.

FINALLY, I WISH YOU FRUITFUL DELIBERATIONS AND CLEAR DECISIONS THAT WILL PROPEL OUR REGION'S INTEGRATION TO GREATER HEIGHTS.

I THANK YOU.