****

**ZAMBIA-CHINA NORTH WESTERN PROVINCE BUSINESS FORUM**

**SOLWEZI, NORTH WESTERN PROVINCE**

**JANUARY 2024**

1. **BACKGROUND**

Following His Excellency, Mr. Hakainde Hichilema and Mr. Xi Jiping, the President of the People’s Republic of China’s agreement to strengthen bilateral ties between Zambia and China in 2023, the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China to Zambia, along with a 50-person delegation, embarked on a mission to visit the North Western Province between 6th and 17th January 2025. During the visit, the Embassy held a business forum with a focus to collect investment opportunities and conduct site visits on already established business. **OBJECTIVES**

The key objectives of the mission were as follows:

1. To promote North Western Province as a Prime Investment Destination
2. To acquire an Economic perspective and understanding of the investment and business landscape of North Western Province
3. To create Joint Ventures and partnerships
4. **OUTCOMES**

The delegation participated in high-level discussions with the Provincial Minister, a business forum led by ZDA, the Provincial Administration, and the North Western Chamber of Commerce and Industry. These were followed by a site visit to Kansashi Mines. The following shows key takeaways from the engagements:

* 1. **Courtesy Call with Provincial Minister, Hon. Robert Lihefu:**

The Agency, alongside the Chinese delegation, consisting of the Deputy Ambassador and Minister Counsellor, Mr. Shang Wang, The Economic and Commercial Counsellor, Mr. Jin Jun, Second Secretary, Mr. Han Xinlu along with two attaches, attended a courtesy call with the Provincial Minister, Honorable Robert Lihefu and members of his Provincial Administration including the Permanent Secretary, Col.G. Katambi, the Deputy Permanent Secretary, Mr.Lackson Mulumbi, the Member of Parliament, Mr. stafford Mulusa, Town Clerk, Mr. Mbewe, and His worship the Mayor of Solwezi, Mr. Remmy Kalepa.

The Minister welcomed the Chinese delegation and reflected on the decades of bilateral relations between Zambia and China which have brought prosperity to Zambia. He further acknowledged Chinese investments in agriculture, mining, and infrastructure development within North Western Province. The Minister made emphasis to the delegation for this first ever initiative to hold a business forum specifically for the province. He appealed to the Chinese delegation, and in extension, the Chinese government, to double its investment in North Western Province.

The Deputy Ambassador acknowledged the warm welcome from North Western Province and made reference to the agreement between His Excellency, Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia and Mr. Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China to make 2024 a “Year of Business Cooperation”. The Deputy Ambassador shared that it was in that same spirit that the initiative was taken. He further made mention of China’s commitment to investing in Zambia through the $1.3 billion USD invested in various sectors over the previous year. The Deputy Ambassador also highlighted various upcoming projects within the province including a solar plant in Kasempa set to begin operations in March 2025 as well as a mealie meal plant in Solwezi, also set to begin operations in 2025. He shared that he was very hopeful for more fruitful collaborations in Solwezi, the new coined term “New Copperbelt.”

Following the remarks from the Minister and Deputy Ambassador, the floor was opened to the present media for questions:

1. ZNBC – When should we expect kickoff for the two projects mentioned and has a place been identified for the mealie meal plant?

**Answer:** The Deputy Ambassador shared that a feasibility study was in the pipeline regarding the mealie meal plant and kickoff should be expected in 2025. The solar plant will kick off in March 2025

1. ZANIS – Do the Chinese have plans to open roads up for connectivity given Solwezi’s strategic location to other markets?

**Answer:** The Deputy Ambassador shared that infrastructure was an important investment and that the market would be a deciding factor on the focus of the roads for infrastructure. The Minister also shared that there has been a road project in Solwezi under a PPP agreement between the Chinese government and PPD.

1. ZANIS (Mr. Jeff Kaoma) – Is the Chinese delegation that came to Solwezi previously the same one that is developing the mealie meal plant?

**Answer:** The Ambassador shared that the team that came to tour 10 hectares in 2024 came as part of a “pre-study” team to look at the land and decide the best place for investment in Zambia. Following that team, a feasibility team will come with engineers to begin planning for the plant.

1. ZANIS (Mr. Jeff Kaoma) – Are we going to see a reduction of Zambian mealie meal on the market?

**Answer:** The Deputy Ambassador share that there are already three plants in Zambia and the demand is still there. They will follow the process and collaborate with Zambian agencies to ensure benefit for Zambians.

* 1. **Zambia – China North Western Province Business Forum**

The aforementioned forum was held at the Kokeb Technology Center on 7th January 2025. The ZDA in collaboration with the North Western Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the North Western Provincial Office, hosted a delegation of 30 Chinese companies and over 80 Zambian companies (please see attached lists) at the afternoon Forum. The Forum was opened by Mr. Mukuka Mulenga, the Chief Executive Officer of the North Western Chamber and Remarks were given by the following:

* Ms. Kayula Lombanya – President of the North Western Chamber of Commerce and Industry who shared the Chamber’s mandate to connect businesses to investment opporutnities. Mr. Lombanya also shared the need for investment in 4 major sectors: mining, energy, agriculture, and infrastructure. She made particular emphasis on the need for value addition in the aforementioned sectors
* Dr. McGerald Mvula – ZDA Board Member – Dr. Mvula shared the Agency’s mandate to promote investment in Zambia and highlighted that the Province is “brimming with untapped potential” making it an ideal destination for investment for the Chinese investors present. Dr. Mvula also emphasised to the participants to refer all investment promotions related issues to ZDA- Solwezi regional office which was recently opened and housed at Solwezi Regulatory Services Centre.
* Mr. Shang Wang – Deputy Ambassador/Minister Counsellor who highlighted once again, the eagerness of the Chinese to invest in Solwezi and the excitement of being able to host a forum like this to make connections. He emphasized that China was responsible for about 52% of committed investment in Zambia and that he hoped to increase that investment within the Province.

The keynote speech was given by the Provincial Minister, Honorable Robert Lihefu who highlighted that North Western Province hold a lot of potential for investment with a 1.2 million population (as of 2022) and access to numerous sectors such as energy, mining, infrastructure, and aquaculture. The Minister issued a challenge to private sector to take advantage of this historic forum to make connections to enhance investment into the Province

Following remarks, several presentations were given by the Agency the Provincial Office, and the Chinese delegations highlighting respectively, the legal framework of investment in Zambia, the investment opportunities in North Western Province, and the ease of doing business in Zambia and in the North Western Province.

* 1. **Site Visit – Kansashi Mines**

The Agency, along with the Chinese delegation from the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China to Zambia, the Provincial Minister and fellow officers, and the North Western Chamber of Commerce and Industry, attended a site visit to Kansashi Mines where the delegation visited two sites to appreciate operations of the Mines. During the visit, the Provincial Minister, Mr. Robert Lihefu, highlighted the positive contribution of the mine to the community and the Province and encouraged the Chinese delegation to consider investing and having a positive impact on the Province as well.

1. **ACTION MATRIX**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Action Item | Responsibility | Deadline |
|  | B2B matchmaking between present Chinese and Zambian companies | ZDA & NW Chamber of Commerce | 17th January 2025 |
|  | Facilitate meetings between interested companies | ZDA | Continuous |

1. **CONCLUSION**

1. **CONCLUSION**

The mission was well attended with over 250 delegates, high level Provincial Administration, and a 52-person delegation of industry leaders from China. The initiative opened doors to future investment into the Province and continued bilateral partnership and relations in Zambia.