

**WELCOME REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR. ENG. JOHN W. KIJAZI, CHIEF
SECRETARY OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, DURING THE
OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING OF
THE TRILATERAL MINISTERIAL MEETING ON TAZARA, HELD AT THE
JULIUS NYERERE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE
DAR ES SALAAM ON 9TH MAY 2016**

- **Honourable, Dr. Roland Msiska, the Secretary to the Cabinet of the Republic of Zambia,**
- **Honourable, Mr. Liu Junfeng, Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Commerce of China,**
- **Honourable Dr. Leonard Chamuriho, the Permanent Secretary for Transport, Ministry of Works, Transport and Communications of the United Republic of Tanzania,**
- **Your Excellency, Dr. Lu Youqing, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Tanzania,**
- **Your Excellency, Madam Judith Kapijimpanga, High Commissioner of the Republic of Zambia to Tanzania.**
- **Your Excellency, Madam Grace Mujuma, High Commissioner of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Republic of Zambia**

- **Distinguished Senior Government Officials from Tanzania, China and Zambia,**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I join with you today to officiate at this Technical Working Group Meeting of experts from the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Zambia and the United Republic of Tanzania, on revitalization of Tanzania-Zambia Railway, famously known as TAZARA. On behalf of the Government and People of the United Republic of Tanzania, and indeed on my own behalf, I would like to extend a warm welcome to you all. **Karibuni sana!**

At the outset, I would like to extend my appreciation to the Government of the People's Republic of China for initiating this meeting whose goal is to discuss the revitalization of TAZARA. In the same vein, I wish to thank the Government of Zambia for sending a high level technical delegation to participate in this meeting. I believe that together, we will have a very productive meeting that will set the stage for the meaningful and timely revitalization of TAZARA. I am here today to assure you that the Government of Tanzania attaches great importance to this meeting and looks forward to its positive outcome.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The story of the TAZARA railway is well known. The railroad that connects Zambia and other countries with the Indian Ocean at Port of Dar es Salaam is an epitome of a

common quest for economic and political independence under the auspices of South - South solidarity and cooperation.

When in the 1970s Tanzania and Zambia decided that it was important to construct a regional railway in order to serve, not only our two countries but also most of the hinterland Southern Africa, it was only China that stood up for that costly but pivotal task. Thus, for five years, about 15,000 Chinese workers toiled bravely alongside more than 45,000 Tanzanian and Zambian workers until the 1,860 kms railway line was finalized on 23 October 1975.

Forty years later, the commitment by our three Governments towards improving the performance of the TAZARA has not withered. Like the founding leaders of this enduring joint project, the current leaders continue to appreciate the importance of the TAZARA Railway not only as a tool for fostering regional connectivity among the eastern and southern African countries but also as an important driver of intra - regional trade. As such this meeting is a befitting tribute to their efforts and sacrifices in planting the seed of cooperation and cultivating good relations we now enjoy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am told that the agenda for this Meeting will enable participants to discuss challenges facing TAZARA today. It is indeed important to discuss those challenges and suggest ways in which we can improve the performance of TAZARA by among others, improving its management and strengthening the commercial aspects of its operations.

Improving TAZARA's performance is our utmost priority given the fact that despite its huge potential, the railway has been underperforming due to various reasons. For example, despite an increase of volumes of throughput cargo at the Port of Dar es Salaam from around 6 million metric tones in the year 2006 to around 15million metric tons in 2015, yet TAZARA's share to serve that traffic has continually dropped from 601,229 metric tones in the financial year 2005/2006 to mere 87,860 metric tones in the financial year 2014/2015.

I am also told that despite an upsurge of copper production in Zambia and the DRC yet the traffic levels recorded by TAZARA have dropped significantly. This poor performance trend has to change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We in the Government of Tanzania believe these challenges can be addressed and we are eager to do just that in collaboration with all our partners in this project. As you may know already, the Fifth Phase Government is committed to transforming Tanzania into a middle-income country, with a vibrant industrialized economy. We are mindful of the fact that a well established and functioning infrastructure

network, comprising of railways, roads, air and maritime transportation is the key for achieving this noble objective.

In this regard, we have taken deliberate measures to improve efficiency at the Dar es Salaam Port, which is currently the main gateway for the TAZARA railway. In addition our Government is working closely with the Government of China in another major project that will involve the construction of the Bagamoyo Port and its associated Special Economic Zone (SEZ). Indeed it is our plan to construct a 40 Km railway line which will link the Bagamoyo SEZ with the TAZARA railway line at Pugu. This move among other things will ensure adequate availability of cargo for the TAZARA railway.

Furthermore, the TAZARA railway will pass right through the project area of the anticipated Mkulazi Integrated Agriculture and Processing Park. This project is in the pipeline and is expected to feature large-scale agricultural production, processing and machinery assembling. All these projects reinforce the relevance of an efficient TAZARA.

I am equally confident that our Zambian colleagues are also anxious to see the revitalized TAZARA since it is obvious that TAZARA's underperformance has inhibited the rate of movement various natural resources and goods to and from Zambia and other neighboring countries.

Worth noting also is the fact that TAZARA is the only regional network which is well positioned to provide a key linking role to the proposed EAC - COMESA - SADC Free Trade Area, which comprises a considerable market of more than 600 million people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On a particular note, I wish to take this opportunity to commend the Government of China for committing to continue working with Africa in the area of infrastructure development. You may recall in his speech during the 6th FOCAC Meeting in South Africa, H.E. Excellency Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China reiterated that:

"China will step up mutually beneficial cooperation with Africa in infrastructure planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance as a way to implement China-Africa infrastructure plan."

I therefore take this opportunity to welcome more qualified Chinese Enterprises to come and seize opportunities available in developing our countries' infrastructure such as railways, roads, electricity transmission lines, irrigation channels, etc.

It is high time that our three sides make use of our ever-blossoming friendship to further the win - win economic relations between our Governments and consequently improve the livelihood of our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On that note, I hereby declare this Technical Working Group Meeting of experts from the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Zambia and the United Republic of Tanzania on revitalization of TAZARA formally opened and wish you constructive and successful deliberations.

I thank you for your kind attention.