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## RSZ Makes \$30 Million Pledge

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The Railway Systems of Zambia (RSZ) has pledged US \$30 million to improve the company's operations. The money will go towards tracks, locomotives, wagons and communications signaling system.

In an interview, Communications and Transport permanent secretary Dominic Sichinga, who revealed this, said Government is concerned with the state of affairs in the railway sector.

He said Zambia's existing rail infrastructure is old and requires huge sums of money to bring it to acceptable standards that will meet private sector needs.

"The existing railway infrastructure was built years back and has served its time. We have noted that there is reduction in usage of the railway due to old infrastructure which has slowed down operations of the industry" he said.

Mr. Sichinga said the existing railway lines are old and their lifespan has gone, hence the need to reinvest in the existing infrastructure.

He said with the economy experiencing growth, local entrepreneurs have invested in trucks which have posed competition to the railway sector as more people prefer using roads.

He said the challenges faced by both RSZ and Tanzania Zambia Railways Authority (TAZARA), to some extent, were not created by them but have been caught up with the economic situation.

He said the bulk of cargo transported by the two railway companies is copper and when the price of metals on the international market is depressed, it affects their business.

"Copper is one of the biggest commodities that the railway sector survives on. Price of copper affects the way the railways are run. TAZARA was built to a large extent to handle copper exports in the 70s" he said.

Mr. Sichinga said Government is looking at ways in which it can improve the railway sector and encourage importers and exporters to use rail transport as opposed to roads.

He said railway is one of the cheapest modes of transport and people should be encouraged to use railway transport rather than roads.

“We are looking at developing the railways transport corridors so that we have a seamless flow of traffic from ports of docking to inner land” he said.

Mr. Sichinga said people can only be encouraged to use the railway if infrastructure is improved.

He said through the Zambia Railways, Government is carrying out inspection of the railway network to come up with a plan that can be used to boost infrastructure.

Mr. Sichinga said Government is also working closely with Tanzania and China to revamp the operations of TAZARA.