

## **RSZ TO INCREASE COPPER EXPORTS BY 20%**

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The Railway Systems of Zambia (RSZ) says it will this year increase its capacity of copper exports by 20% following the commencement of joint operations with the Tanzania – Zambia Railway (TAZARA). RSZ Deputy General Manager for Corporate Affairs Charles Phiri said the joint operations that the company has engaged in TAZARA are working well and that the company is recording marked efficiency in moving cargo.

Mr. Phiri said this is a statement released in Lusaka, he said last year RSZ moved over 400,000 tones of copper products out of which 70,000 tones were moved through TAZARA and of these 50,000 tones were imports. Since January last year, the RSZ has been operating eight of its locomotives jointly with TAZARA to improve capacity as well as service delivery to the port of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania.

Mr. Phiri said with better coordination and cooperation that the two companies are enjoying the haulage of copper exports will increase to 500,000 tones this year adding that this will be made possible due to market demand and wagon's rehabilitation. He said RSZ is determined to resolve delays at the border points and that is currently holding discussions with other sister railway firms and authorities in neighboring countries aimed at improving efficiency and service delivery. However, the company faces a lot of challenges including vandalism and high maintenance costs.

The partnership of RSZ and TAZARA is buoyed by China's cancellation of 50% of the unpaid loan which Zambia got from the country for the construction of TAZARA. Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao said this in Beijing on Friday when he held a closed door meeting with President Banda who is in China for a state visit. This is contained in a statement issued from Beijing by Special Assistant to the President for press and Public Relation Dickson Jere.

The Chinese Premier informed President Banda and his delegation that China, which helped in the construction of TAZARA, has decided to cancel 50% of unpaid loans. Mr. Wen told the President that the Chinese government will also constitute a team of experts to help TAZARA overcome its difficulties because it is a significant asset for the economic development of Zambia and neighboring countries that depend on the railway line for transport.

President Banda thanked the Chinese Government, saying this will go a long way to resuscitate the operations of TAZARA