

STATEMENT ON FLASH FIRE ACCIDENT AT KAFUE GORGE LOWER HYDROPOWER PROJECT SITE – FRIDAY, 23RD OCTOBER 2020

A flash-fire accident occurred at the Kafue Gorge Lower Hydropower Plant (under construction) on Friday, 23rd October 2020 at around 11:30hrs.

Preliminary investigations have revealed that the three employees were assigned to cut protruding tie rods bars that were used to hold formwork on the upstream face of the Roller Compacted Concrete (RCC) dam wall. As the workers who were in a motorized cage were cutting a tie rod mid-way on the dam surface, fire from the cutting torch caught on to nylon rope that was next to the motorized elevated working platform and the burning rope fell to the foot of the dam on a pile of remnants of polyuria – a waterproof coating that has been applied on the lower section of the upstream face of the dam wall concrete. The polyuria material ignited resulting in approximately one third of the coated surface of the dam wall catching fire. The polyuria flame spread upwards very quickly from the foot of the dam and caught the elevated working platform causing the three workers to suffer burns.

Immediately after the fire started employees who were working on top of the dam crest started fighting the fire using available firefighting equipment and managed to rescue their colleagues, called for help and transferred the victims to the site clinic where they received first aid. The victims were later referred to UTH for specialized treatment.

Of the three employees, Mr. Joseph Muchini was discharged from the hospital on 24th October while Messrs. Silon Chisi and Kakulubelwa Kakulubelwa are still admitted to UTH and their condition has been described as stable by hospital authorities.

The flash-fire incident is not expected to have any impact on the construction milestones of the project other than time required to clean the affected portion of the dam. The heat intensity of the fire was very low as the material that burnt was a very thin coating layer with a rapid burning rate and therefore has not affected the concrete structure in any way.

The accident was reported to regulatory and investigative wings and their reports are still being awaited.