

26th November 2014.

STATEMENT ON FIRE AT KASUMBALESA BORDER POST.

FESARTA is advised of a horrific accident occurring at the Customs parking area on the DRC side of the Kasumbalesa border post, between Zambia and the DRC.

More than two hundred trucks were parked in this area at the time. From the initial reports received, the fire was caused by a collision between two tankers, which led to a leak from the tank of one of the two tankers filled with gasoline. The fuel then caught fire due to contact with wood stoves used by other drivers in a nearby kitchen. It is not yet clear as to the country of origin of the tanker that had its tank ruptured. Leakage of fuel due to theft in the parking area by unknown persons was not the likely cause. It is understood that four people have died as a result of the fire, and 48 trucks have been burnt out. Firefighters are still on the scene, though the border is operational.

FESARTA sincerely regrets the loss of life in this accident, and extends its condolences to the families of those deceased. The drivers were just going about their daily business and could not have expected to be involved in such an accident.

It has been stated on many occasions, that vehicles carrying dangerous goods, when parked in congested areas at the borders, are an accident waiting to happen. This was referenced mainly to Beitbridge, between South Africa and Zimbabwe. It so happened that Beitbridge has been temporarily spared of such an event, and Kasumbalesa was the recipient instead. The problem remains and something has to be done about it - either give dangerous goods vehicles fast clearance, or give them a special parking area.

We know that borders are congested and space is at a premium. But, the stakes are too high to not make some concessions. FESARTA will pursue this matter.

FESARTA has been communicating closely with ICCO, the National Road Transport Association (NRTA) in the Katanga province of DRC. It is assumed that an official investigation will be set up without delay. Several questions have been sent to ICCO and they are to be tabled at the investigation. There will naturally be several other questions to be answered.

When the investigation is completed and outcomes drafted, FESARTA will work together with its member NRTAs to determine the best way forward to avoid similar future occurrences.

Again, our sincere condolences to the families of those affected.

Barney Curtis.
Executive Director

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