**Dott Services Must Respect Timelines on DRC Roads- Gen Katumba**

***Uganda’s Minister of Works and Transport, Gen Katumba Wamala, has sounded an early warning to Dott Services Limited, the company which is going to construct roads in Eastern DRC to be mindful of project specifications and timelines. Gen Katumba spoke to journalists in the city of Goma on Friday after handing over two sites to Dott with his DRc counterpart Hon Alext Gisara Muvunyi. Below are the excerpts:***

**On the site handover in Beni and Goma:**

It is my pleasure and honour to be here and witness the site handover for this regional roads project that marks the start of the construction of three roads that connect Uganda to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). During the State Visit of the President of DRC, H. E. Felix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo from 9-10 November 2019, it was agreed with the President of the Republic of Uganda, H. E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni that the two countries would implement certain strategic infrastructure projects, including the construction and upgrading of 1,182km of main roads network connecting the two countries.

**On the Project Details:**

*During the Quadripartite Summit held on 21 February, 2020 at Katuna in Uganda, under the Luanda process, the two Heads of State of DRC and Uganda reaffirmed their commitment to the joint construction or upgrading of the roads network connecting them and agreed on the immediate joint implementation of a project covering the Mpondwe/Kasindi – Beni road (80km), Bunagana – Rutshuru – Goma Road (89km) and the Beni – Butembo (54km), which were designated as priority roads.*

**On Timelines and Project Specifications:**

I would like to call upon the Contractor and Consultant to be mindful of the project specifications and timelines and ensure adherence to the requirements of our two Governments. The project roads are part of the strategic infrastructure projects, including the construction and upgrading of 1,182km of main roads network connecting the two Countries, to be implemented by the two Countries in the short to medium term.

**On the objectives of these road projects:**

*The objectives of this project are: To strengthen bilateral relations between Uganda and DRC; To increase the volume of trade between Uganda and DRC; To ease ways of doing business; To improve people to people movement and security; and To fast track regional integration.*

**On Milestones achieved so far:**

Uganda and DRC’s commitment to this project has been witnessed by four milestones. The first one is the Inter-Governmental Agreement and Project Development Agreement were signed on 27 May 2021 at State House, Entebbe, Uganda. The second one is the ground breaking ceremony at Kasindi and Mpondwe held on 16 June, 2021 was graced by our two Heads of State. The third one is the Inter-Governmental Agreement was ratified by the Cabinet of Uganda on 25 October 2021. The last one is what you have seen today. We are here for site handover so that the Contractor, DOTT SERVICES LIMITED, can commence the physical works.

**On people who have seen this process thus far:**

*I thank the Project Steering Committee and the technical staff for the work done to reach this critical milestone. I also thank the Governor of North Kivu Province and all the local leaders for the support accorded to this very important project.*

**On Citizen Support:**

I request citizens of Uganda and DRC to continue supporting the project, particularly to support the Contractor within DRC to familiarize with the project area, get access to project inputs and get started with the physical works. I definitely look forward to successful project implementation and should any problem arise at any time, the contractor is free to let us know and have it addressed promptly.

**“For Immediate Release”**

**‘DRC Roads’ Construction to Start This Week**

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has officially handed over crucial sites to Dott Services Limited, paving the way for the start of the long - awaited construction of the 223 Kilometer road network that will open the Eastern part of the country to cross border trade with Uganda.

The project is branded as the Regional Connectivity Roads Project, also known as ‘DRC Roads Project.’

The handover ceremony took place in two DRC cities of Beni and Goma in the North Kivu Province on Friday, December 4th 2021.

The two ceremonies were witnessed by two delegations from Uganda and DRC, plus the Dott Services Limited leadership, a Ugandan construction firm which won the tender to build the roads.

The Ugandan delegation was led by the Minister of Works and Transport Gen. Katumba Wamala. The DRC delegation was led by the DRC Minister o for Infrastructure and Public Works Mr. Alexi Gisaro Muvunyi.

The handover of the sites came on the heels of a visit to the company’s Inland Custom Deports (ICD) at Namanve Industrial Park in Uganda on Wednesday last week by the steering committee of nine members composed of technical officials from DRC, Uganda and Dott which was set up to fast track the road construction project. Following the visit, the committee was satisfied that the company was ready for the job following its display of relevant equipment and technical capacity.

During the hand over, Gen Katumba appealed to Congolese residents to support the construction.

“Do not to steal the roads equipment. Do not touch the fuel and other essentials. This opportunity has come to you to benefit from it in a meaningful way. Please give all the support to the contract and work with them to ensure that the project succeeds,” he said.

DRC Minister for Infrastructure and Public Works, Hon Muvunyi revealed that the project would boast trade between the two countries and promised the population that the construction will bring jobs and interconnectedness with Uganda.

The North Kivu Governor Lieutenant General Ndima Kongba Constant asked the Congolese to back the project:

“When the contractor is hungry, give him food. When he is thirsty, give him water, when he needs a room, and give him a bed to sleep on. This is because they have come to not only to build roads but also to improve our livelihoods employ you,” he said.

The leaders observed that the trade between the countries is going to grow since transportation of goods between the two countries has been hampered by poor infrastructure in the past.

“I urge the children of Goma, Beni, Kasindi and Nyiragongo to warm the project and grant it peace and tranquility,” Gen Ndima appealed.

On their part, Dott Services Limited promised to move road equipment to DRC this week in order to commence road works. So far, Dott Services Limited have assembled 40 trucks, 22 rollers, 22 graders, and 22 excavators and 20 fabricated containers to cover office space and residences for the company staff. The company has additionally promised t move this equipment to the designated sites in DRC this week.

**Background Notes for the Editor:**

In May this year, Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) signed two agreements aimed at enhancing bilateral trade and strengthening infrastructure development for the mutual benefit of both countries.

The signing of these Agreements followed the State visit to Uganda by Felix Antionè Tshisekedi from 9th – 10th November 2019 where both Presidents emphasized the importance of developing cross – border infrastructure which is essential to facilitate trade between the two countries.

The agreements came from a background that despite the lucrative business opportunities between the two nations, trade has been hampered by the poor road network.

The Agreements, the Inter–Governmental Agreement (IGA) was signed by President Yoweri Museveni and Chrisrophe Lutundula Apala, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and witnessed by Jacob Oulanyah Speaker of the Republic of Uganda.

**The DRC Roads Explained:**

The DRC roads are broken down as follows:

➡ Mpondwe/Kasindi- Beni (80km)

➡ Bunagana- Rutshuru- Goma Road (89km)

➡ Beni-Butembo Axis (54km)

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