



AMATHEON AGRI

# Germans showing increased interest in Zambia

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His Excellency Bwalya S.K. Chiti

## “GERMANS SHOWING INCREASED INTEREST IN ZAMBIA”

*In an exclusive interview with The African Courier, Zambia's ambassador to Germany, His Excellency Bwalya S.K. Chiti, talks about the enduring peace in his country for the past five decades, Zambia's democracy, and why investors and tourists should come to Zambia, among other issues.*

### **Your Excellency, what would you describe as Zambia's greatest achievement since independence?**

Zambia stands out among other countries on the African continent as having experienced a stable and peaceful socio-political environment since attainment of independence from Britain in 1964.

### **What is the secret of the enduring peace in Zambia?**

Zambia offers a unique example of unity in diversity, binding together 72 ethnic groups in one nation. This did not come about by sheer luck, but through concerted efforts of earlier leaders who steered the country to its independence. And immediately after independence, the various political interests were quickly harmonised and subordinated to a greater national aspiration. Hence, national interest has pacified what would have otherwise permanently divided the people of Zambia.

### **How strong is Zambia's democracy today?**

Zambians acknowledge the state's constitution and legitimacy. General elections are held regularly and accepted in principle as the means of filling leadership positions. In this regard, Zambia has successfully elected five presidents and has experienced peaceful handovers of presidential power but also change of the governing parties.



The democratically elected president and parliament have the effective powers to govern. A separation of powers is basically observed.

**Your country contributed gallantly to, and sacrificed enormously for, the decolonisation of southern Africa. What's your relationship with the other countries in the region today?**

The support Zambia gave to the liberation movements of southern Africa is a strong theme in Zambian history and national identity. It was done at great cost in terms of human lives, infrastructure damage and lost opportunities for economic growth and development. It was not by accident, therefore, that the first African country visited by the late iconic global statesman, Nelson Mandela, after his release from prison happened to be Zambia.

Therefore the promotion and pursuit of cordial relations with other countries in the region is a driving force of Zambia's foreign policy. Zambia appreciates the opportunities offered by regional bodies such as the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) as its foreign policy focuses on economic growth and development.

**In 2010, the World Bank named Zambia one of the world's fastest economically reformed countries and this year it predicts that Zambia is set to continue its economic growth above 6 per cent. What policies are responsible for such an admirable economic performance?**

Zambia is a multi-party democracy and provides a market-oriented liberalised business climate. The government, through the central bank, has created a favourable macroeconomic environment that has led to a downward trend in the cost of borrowing and an improved access to long-term finance.

**The Chinese are a big investor in Zambia. Is your country still open to other foreign investors?**

Zambia welcomes investors from all over the world and across various sectors. In fact, the laws relating to investment provide for incentives to promote increased levels of investment and international trade.

**Why should an investor come to Zambia?**

That Zambia currently holds a B+ credit rating, according to the international rating agencies Fitch and S&P, strengthens the country's standing as an investment destination.

The Zambian government has already taken advantage of this and issued a US\$750 million Eurobond in 2012, which was oversubscribed. In the same year, Zambia registered investment pledges of around US\$10.1 billion, more than doubling the amount that was registered in 2011 (US\$4.7 billion).

This clearly shows the attractiveness of Zambia as an investment destination for international companies.

Furthermore, Zambia's membership of SADC and COMESA provides preferential conditions for trade through the free-trade areas, offering investors duty free access to regional markets.

The country's central location in the region, as well as a combination of key strengths such as abundant natural resources, skilled manpower, laws guaranteeing investor security, being a good place to live and work and a thriving private sector, makes it an ideal investment destination.



## **AMATHEON AGRI**

The government is aggressively addressing the issue of reducing the cost of doing business in Zambia by improving infrastructure such as roads, telecommunications, energy and water which are all embodied in the objectives of its Sixth National Development Plan.

### **What incentives are you offering prospective investors?**

Continuous and concerted efforts are being made to streamline the company licensing procedures. Legal requirements for doing business in the country have been reduced to an absolute minimum and time-wasting procedures that may confront foreign investors elsewhere are being eliminated in Zambia. Licences are issued at reasonable costs and with minimum bureaucracy.

In addition, the Zambian Development Agency in Lusaka is a one-stop shop that provides local and foreign investors with all information and services required to set up their operation in the country.

### **Germany has the biggest economy in Europe. How important is it to Zambia?**

While economic relations between our two countries go as far back as 1966 when a Bilateral Investment Protection Treaty was signed, promoting and protecting investments in both countries, it is not until recently that tangible business relations have come forth, especially regarding German foreign direct investment in Zambia.

The German private sector is now awakened to the opportunities in Zambia – mining, agriculture, infrastructure development, manufacturing, energy and information technology, among others.

German business delegations regularly visit Zambia, most recently in May 2014. Germans are showing increased interest in Zambia. Among the recent German investors in my country is Amatheon Agri Holding Company, which prides itself as the first major German agro-business investor in Zambia.

In order to strengthen the still very modest economic relations between Zambia and Germany, the German-Zambian Business Information Linkage Desk (GZID) was established at the Zambia Development Agency in 2011. The GZID provides information on business opportunities in Germany and Zambia for German and Zambian companies and facilitates trade between the two countries.

### **If I were a leisure traveller, what reasons would I have to visit Zambia?**

Zambia is home to the mighty Victoria Falls which is the world's largest sheet of falling water. It is absolutely amazing! The Victoria Falls is roughly twice the height of North America's Niagara Falls and well over twice the width of its Horseshoe Falls. This is one place every person should have the opportunity to see before they die. You will never forget it.

Zambia is also the land of the legendary African walking safari, the wild Zambezi River, abundant wildlife and raw wilderness. Most people in my country speak English and are extremely friendly and helpful.

Please come and explore Zambia!

**Thank you very much for your time, Your Excellency.**