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# Zambia Delays Tazama Pipeline Open Access to January Amid IMF Pressure

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Zambia has pushed back the resumption of open access on its primary fuel-import pipeline to January, extending by several months a transition that international lenders, including the IMF, have been pressing Lusaka to complete. Ephraim Munshifwa, permanent secretary at the Ministry of Energy, confirmed the revised timeline, stating plainly: "By January, we resume open access." The delay means Vitol Group's exclusive arrangement to supply diesel through the infrastructure will remain in place until the new year.

The Tazama pipeline spans 1,700 kilometres, connecting the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam to Zambia's mineral-rich Copperbelt province. As the primary fuel-import artery for this landlocked nation, the pipeline is critical to powering Zambia's mining sector and broader economy. Zambia suspended open access earlier this year after geopolitical disruptions linked to Iran-related conflict unsettled global energy markets and raised fears of domestic fuel shortages. In response, the government enacted emergency measures and awarded Vitol, the world's largest independent commodity trader, exclusive pipeline access to secure diesel supply.

While the government defended the exclusive deal as a temporary safeguard, the IMF specifically targeted the monopoly arrangement, urging Zambia to reopen the line to foster lower procurement costs and greater market transparency. Preparations are now formally underway. Tazama Pipeline Ltd. had initially invited oil trading companies to pre-qualify for diesel transport starting October, but subsequently extended its pre-qualification deadline to 22 September to accommodate a broader pool of interested parties. When competitive access resumes in January, multiple fuel

traders will be eligible to bid for capacity on the line, formally ending Vitol's exclusive position.

For companies tracking infrastructure developments in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Tazama situation illustrates the tension between emergency state intervention and the market liberalisation conditions attached to IMF programme support. Zambia's willingness to extend the deadline, rather than accelerate it, suggests that logistical and regulatory preparations required more time than initially anticipated — a pattern common to pipeline transition processes in the region. The Copperbelt's mining sector, which anchors Zambia's economy and its foreign-currency earnings, remains the end-user most exposed to fuel supply reliability and cost volatility during this transition period.

Once open access is restored, competitive dynamics on the Tazama corridor will hinge on which traders secure pre-qualification and how Tazama Pipeline Ltd. allocates available capacity. The extension of the pre-qualification window to late September indicates the company is prioritising a broad and orderly process over speed. For regional energy market participants and infrastructure operators, January represents a meaningful structural change to one of Southern Africa's most strategically significant fuel-import routes.

### **Why this matters to partners and clients of Saga**

The Tazama pipeline transition is primarily a fuel-trading and regulatory story at this stage, with limited near-term opportunities for Norwegian subsea or FPSO specialists. However, Norwegian pipeline integrity, inspection, and operations management firms should monitor the situation: as competitive access broadens and throughput pressure increases, Tazama Pipeline Ltd. may seek third-party technical partners for pipeline condition assessment and capacity optimisation. Service companies with African pipeline O&M credentials should position ahead of any procurement activity that follows the January reopening.

## PARTNER ANGLES

- **Pipeline:** Norwegian pipeline integrity and inspection firms should track Tazama's post-transition operational needs, as increased multi-user throughput typically triggers demand for third-party condition assessments and maintenance contracts.
- **Service:** Logistics and fuel-handling service companies could explore supporting new entrant traders seeking operational infrastructure along the Dar es Salaam-Copperbelt corridor once open access resumes in January.
- **Subsea/FPSO:** The upstream angle is limited here, but companies already active in Tanzanian offshore or port infrastructure near Dar es Salaam should note the pipeline's strategic importance to Zambia's fuel import chain.
- **LNG:** As Zambia evaluates longer-term energy security beyond refined product imports, there may be an opening for LNG-to-power advisory or infrastructure discussions tied to reducing pipeline dependency for the mining sector.

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