

SPEECH *for the*

**OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE
THIRTEENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

by

**THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MR. HAKAINDE HICHILEMA**

on

FRIDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 2023

INTRODUCTION

MADAM SPEAKER,

- 1.** WE JOIN YOU TODAY TO OFFICIALLY OPEN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE THIRTEENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY; AN OCCASION THAT PROVIDES US WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT ON THE PROGRESS WE ARE MAKING AS A NATION, TOWARDS OUR DEVELOPMENT ASPIRATIONS.
- 2.** OUR TWO YEARS IN OFFICE CONFIRMS TO US THAT DEVELOPMENT IS NOT A STRAIGHT FORWARD JOURNEY, BUT WE ARE DETERMINED TO ENSURE THAT ALL WE HAVE ENVISIONED WILL BE FULFILLED. WE THANK OUR CITIZENS FOR THE RESILIENCE AND THE SUPPORT THEY HAVE RENDERED TO US DURING THE PERIOD.

MADAM SPEAKER,

- 3.** THE LAST SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WAS INDEED VERY PRODUCTIVE. THE HOUSE PASSED **21** BILLS AND CONSIDERED **37** COMMITTEE REPORTS; **413** QUESTIONS AND **15** PRIVATE MEMBERS MOTIONS. IN ADDITION, **68** MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS WERE RENDERED ON THE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE.
- 4.** WE COMMEND YOU AND YOUR TWO DEPUTIES FOR PROVIDING EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP TO THIS AUGUST HOUSE.
- 5.** IN THE SAME LIGHT, WE COMMEND HER HONOUR THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA FOR ENSURING THAT GOVERNMENT BUSINESS IN THE HOUSE WAS CONDUCTED IN AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT MANNER.
- 6.** FURTHER, WE EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE TO THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND HIS STAFF, AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE SUPPORT RENDERED TO THIS AUGUST HOUSE TO ALLOW FOR SMOOTH BUSINESS.

7. HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, WE COMMEND YOU TOO, FOR EFFECTIVELY REPRESENTING YOUR CONSTITUENCIES AND THE NATION AT LARGE.

THEME OF THE ADDRESS

MADAM SPEAKER,

8. IN 2021, WE COMMITTED TO TURNING AROUND THE ECONOMY AND SETTING THE COUNTRY ON A COURSE TOWARDS PROSPERITY. DESPITE THE TOUGH JOURNEY, THE COUNTRY IS NOW ON THE PATH TO ATTAINING OUR ASPIRATIONS ENSHRINED IN THE NATIONAL VISION 2030, OF BECOMING A PROSPEROUS MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRY.

9. OUR FOCUS TODAY, IS ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS MADE SO FAR IN ENSURING A BRIGHTER FUTURE. IT IS IN THIS REGARD THAT THE THEME FOR OUR ADDRESS IS ***"BUILDING ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC GAINS FOR IMPROVED LIVELIHOODS AND A BETTER ZAMBIA."***

10. OUR THEME CALLS UPON EVERY ZAMBIAN CITIZEN AND THE ENTIRE NATION TO UNITE AND BUILD UPON OUR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE ACHIEVEMENTS FORGING A MORE PRODUCTIVE AND UNIFIED NATION, THAT FUTURE GENERATIONS WILL PROUDLY REFLECT UPON.

MACRO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

MADAM SPEAKER,

11. UPON ASSUMING OFFICE, OUR PRIORITY WAS TO RESTORE THE RULE OF LAW, FIX THE ECONOMY, BY SEALING LEAKAGES, INTRODUCING FINANCIAL PRUDENCE AND MAINTAINING MACROECONOMIC STABILITY FOR SUSTAINED GROWTH.

- 12.** WE ARE, THEREFORE, PROUD TO REPORT TO THIS AUGUST HOUSE THAT PRUDENT SPENDING HAS BEEN RETURNED AND WITH IT A POSITIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH RECORDED AT **4.7 PERCENT** IN 2022.
- 13.** WE HAVE MANAGED TO REDUCE THE END OF YEAR INFLATION TO SINGLE DIGIT AT **9.9 PERCENT** FOR 2022. IN THE SAME VEIN, WE ARE WORKING HARD TO STABILISE THE EXCHANGE RATE OF THE KWACHA AGAINST MAJOR CURRENCIES.
- 14.** PART OF OUR STRATEGY TO FIX THE ECONOMY, WAS TO DEAL WITH THE HUGE DEBT STOCK. OUR EFFORTS, UNDER THE G20 COMMON FRAMEWORK, RESULTED IN THE DEBT RESTRUCTURING AGREEMENT WITH OUR OFFICIAL CREDITORS, WHICH HAS ACCORDED THE PEOPLE OF ZAMBIA SIGNIFICANT DEBT RELIEF. UNDER THIS AGREEMENT, DEBT REPAYMENTS HAVE BEEN RESCHEDULED BY MORE THAN TWELVE YEARS AND INTEREST RATES REDUCED TO CONCESSIONAL LEVELS FOR THE NEXT FOURTEEN YEARS.
- 15.** THE AGREEMENT ALSO PAVES WAY FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH OUR PRIVATE CREDITORS, WHOM WE ARE OPTIMISTIC WILL PROVIDE COMPARABLE TERMS TO THOSE OF THE OFFICIAL CREDITOR COMMITTEE.

MADAM SPEAKER,

- 16.** THE ROAD TO SECURING THE DEBT RESTRUCTURING AGREEMENT WAS LIKE A MISSION IMPOSSIBLE. IT REQUIRED A COMPLEX NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION WITH OUR PARTNERS FROM DIVERSE INTEREST GROUPS. WE, THEREFORE, THANK MEMBERS OF THE OFFICIAL CREDITOR COMMITTEE, CO-CHAIRLED BY CHINA AND FRANCE, WITH SOUTH AFRICA BEING THE VICE-CHAIR. OUR GRATITUDE IS ALSO EXTENDED TO BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS, AS WELL AS OUR TEAM AND CITIZENS, FOR BEING SUPPORTIVE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS.

17. THIS MISSION IMPOSSIBLE WAS ACHIEVED IN UNDER TWO YEARS OF OUR ADMINISTRATION. THE DEBT MOUNTAIN WAS LIKE A PYTHON CONSTRICTING OUR NECK, OUR CHEST AND OUR LEGS. ZAMBIAN CITIZENS SHOULD NEVER ALLOW SUCH RECKLESSNESS TO HAPPEN EVER AGAIN.

18. THE 2024 NATIONAL BUDGET TO BE PRESENTED SOON BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND NATIONAL PLANNING, WILL OUTLINE SPECIFIC MEASURES TO CONTINUE BUILDING ON THE MACRO-ECONOMIC GAINS ACHIEVED SO FAR. WE URGE THIS AUGUST HOUSE TO SUPPORT THE BUDGET FOR IMPROVED LIVELIHOODS AND A BETTER ZAMBIA.

MADAM SPEAKER,

19. WE NOW HIGHLIGHT THE STRIDES WE HAVE MADE AND THE POLICY MEASURES TO BE PURSUED IN LINE WITH THE EIGHTH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AND JOB CREATION

MADAM SPEAKER,

PRODUCTION, HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY, VALUE ADDITION, INVESTMENT AND TRADE REMAIN THE KEY PILLARS TO OUR ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AGENDA THROUGH OUR CITIZENS.

20. AGRICULTURE REMAINS THE BEDROCK OF OUR ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION AND JOB CREATION AGENDA TO ADDRESS PAST ILLS. WE ARE MAKING STEADY PROGRESS IN TRANSFORMING THE SECTOR TO MAKE IT MORE EFFICIENT AND PRODUCTIVE FOR THE BENEFIT OF OUR PEOPLE.

- 21.** THE UNITED PARTY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (UPND) NEW DAWN ADMINISTRATION HAS CONTINUED TO SUPPORT SMALL-SCALE FARMERS WITH INPUTS, UNDER THE FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME (FISP). WE WILL CONTINUE TO DO BETTER AND WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE COMPREHENSIVE AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION SUPPORT PROGRAMME (CATSP).
- 22.** IN THE 2022/2023 FARMING SEASON, **1,024,434** (ONE MILLION AND TWENTY-FOUR THOUSAND, FOUR HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FOUR) SMALL-SCALE FARMERS WERE PROVIDED WITH INPUTS. HOWEVER, OUR MAIZE SUPPLY HAS COME UNDER IMMENSE PRESSURE DUE TO REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SUPPLY DEFICITS ARISING FROM FACTORS SUCH AS CLIMATE CHANGE AND INSTABILITY IN SOME PARTS OF THE WORLD.
- 23.** CONSEQUENTLY, OUR FOOD SECURITY HAS BEEN IMPACTED AS EVIDENCED BY RISING PRICES OF MEALIE MEAL IN THE COUNTRY. WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THIS SITUATION AND ARE DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO STABILISE THE PRICE OF THE COMMODITY. FURTHERMORE, WE ARE PUTTING IN PLACE MEASURES WHICH WILL CUSHION THE VULNERABLE IN OUR SOCIETY.

MADAM SPEAKER,

- 24.** IN ORDER TO STIMULATE PRODUCTION OF OUR STAPLE FOOD, MAIZE, TO ADDRESS THE SUPPLY CHALLENGES WE HAVE STATED ABOVE, WE ARE PUTTING IN PLACE THE FOLLOWING MEASURES:
- 1) STARTING FROM THE CURRENT MARKETING SEASON, WE HAVE INCREASED THE PURCHASE PRICE OF MAIZE TO K280 FROM K180 PER 50KG BAG.
 - 2) WE ARE ESTABLISHING A CREDIT WINDOW TO SUPPORT SMALL SCALE FARMERS, PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS AND OTHERS WITH AFFORDABLE FINANCING FOR INPUTS, MECHANISATION AND IRRIGATION.

3) WE ARE ENCOURAGING EARLY MAIZE PRODUCTION FROM COMMERCIAL AND OTHER FARMERS BY GUARANTEEING A READY MARKET.

25. IN ORDER TO INCREASE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND PRODUCTIVITY IN THE MEDIUM TO LONGER TERM, WE HAVE MADE CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE IN FARM BLOCKS.

26. FOR INSTANCE, WE WILL ACCELERATE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FARM BLOCKS THROUGH THE **US\$300 MILLION** ZAMBIA GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES PROJECT. THIS WILL INVOLVE IMPROVING ROAD NETWORKS, PROVISION OF POWER AND CONSTRUCTION OF SKILLS TRAINING CENTRES.

MADAM SPEAKER,

27. OUR DESIRE TO PROVIDE AGRICULTURAL MECHANISATION SERVICES TO OUR SMALL-SCALE FARMERS IS BECOMING A REALITY. IN 2022, A TOTAL OF **4,000** SMALL-SCALE FARMERS WERE PROVIDED WITH TRACTOR-BASED MECHANISATION SERVICES, EXCEEDING THE ANNUAL TARGET OF **1,500** FARMERS.

28. PROVISION OF IRRIGATION FACILITIES IS ANOTHER PRIORITY FOR THE UPND NEW DAWN ADMINISTRATION. WE WILL CONTINUE WITH CONSTRUCTION, REHABILITATION AND MAINTENANCE OF WATER HARVESTING AND IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE ACROSS THE COUNTRY. OUR TARGET IS TO REDUCE OVERDEPENDENCE ON RAIN-FED AGRICULTURE AND ENSURE PLANTING THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

MADAM SPEAKER,

29. OUR GOVERNMENT IS EXPANDING THE COVERAGE OF EXTENSION SERVICES TO OUR FARMERS. WE WILL RECRUIT MORE FRONTLINE STAFF TO SUPPORT OUR FARMERS IN THE CROP, LIVESTOCK AND FISHERIES SUB-SECTORS.

MADAM SPEAKER,

30. WE HAVE HEIGHTENED SURVEILLANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF LIVESTOCK DISEASES AND ALSO INTENSIFIED VACCINATIONS IN THE DISEASE PRONE AREAS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

31. THIS YEAR, WE MANAGED TO CONTROL AFRICAN SWINE FEVER DISEASE OUTBREAK. WE ALSO REDUCED THE INCIDENCE OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2023. FURTHER, WE HAVE WORKED TO CONTROL THE CONTAGIOUS BOVINE PLEUROPNEUMONIA (**CBPP**) IN CHISAMBA DISTRICT WITHIN MONTHS OF THE OUTBREAK.

32. IN A BID TO CONTAIN **CBPP** IN WESTERN PROVINCE, WE ARE CURRENTLY CONDUCTING MASS VACCINATION OF ANIMALS AGAINST THE DISEASE. WITH THESE EFFORTS, WE HAVE WITNESSED A SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN STOCK MOVEMENT RESTRICTIONS.

33. THE FISHERIES SUB-SECTOR IS A CRITICAL GROWTH AREA. TO INCREASE FISH PRODUCTION AND SUSTAINABLE UTILISATION OF FISHERY RESOURCES, WE HAVE DEVELOPED THE FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE POLICY. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS POLICY WILL BRIDGE THE CURRENT FISH DEFICIT ESTIMATED AT **74,000** METRIC TONNES PER ANNUM.

MADAM SPEAKER,

34. TO ENHANCE MARKET ACCESS FOR NON-TRADITIONAL EXPORTS IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR, WE HAVE CONTINUED TO MEET THE PHYTOSANITARY REQUIREMENTS RESULTING INTO MORE OF OUR PRODUCTS BEING ACCEPTED ON THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET.

35. WE ARE PLEASED TO INFORM THE HOUSE THAT, THIS YEAR, WE HAVE SO FAR EXPORTED AROUND **127** METRIC TONNES OF AVOCADO FRUIT TO THE EUROPEAN UNION COMPARED TO **37** METRIC TONNES IN 2022. IN ADDITION, THE COUNTRY HAS EXPORTED AROUND **1,215** METRIC TONNES OF FRESH CUT FLOWERS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE FIRST HALF OF THIS YEAR COMPARED TO **853** METRIC TONNES IN 2022. WE CAN DO MORE.

36. FURTHER, IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2023, WE EXPORTED **488** METRIC TONNES OF PASSION FRUIT COMPARED TO **50** METRIC TONNES IN 2022 AND **106** METRIC TONNES OF FRESH VEGETABLES, COMPARED TO **36** METRIC TONNES IN THE SAME PERIOD.

37. WE COMMEND THE PRIVATE SECTOR FOR LEVERAGING THE EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES CREATED IN LUCRATIVE CASH CROPS AND HORTICULTURE MARKETS IN THE REGION AND BEYOND.

MADAM SPEAKER,

38. THE MINING SECTOR IS SIGNIFICANT TO OUR ECONOMY. WE SHARE THE PAIN AND FRUSTRATION OF OUR PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THOSE ON THE COPPERBELT, ON THE PROTRACTED PROCESS OF RESOLVING OUTSTANDING ISSUES AT KONKOLA AND MOPANI COPPER MINES. THE EXTENDED NEGOTIATIONS

WERE TO ENSURE THAT WE ACHIEVE THE BEST OUTCOME THAT WILL SAFEGUARD THE INTEREST OF OUR PEOPLE.

THE UPND GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT WE SHOULD NOT MINE IN COURT BUT AT THE MINES. THIS IS TO DISCOURAGE EXCESSIVE LITIGATION IN THE SECTOR.

39. FOLLOWING THESE NEGOTIATIONS, VEDANTA RESOURCES LIMITED HAS COMMITTED AND AGREED TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- 1) ONE BILLION DOLLARS INVESTMENT IN KONKOLA COPPER MINE DEVELOPMENT.
- 2) TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY MILLION DOLLARS PAYMENT TO LOCAL CREDITORS.
- 3) AN ANNUAL TWENTY MILLION DOLLARS INVESTMENT INTO THE COMMUNITY AS PART OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH A SPECIAL PURPOSE VEHICLE CALLED COMMUNITY TRUST AND TWENTY PERCENT SALARY INCREMENT FOR ALL EMPLOYEES.

40. WE REASSURE OUR CITIZENS THAT GOVERNMENT IS WORKING HARD TO RESOLVE ALL THE OUTSTANDING ISSUES AT ALL MINES INCLUDING MOPANI COPPER MINES.

41. AND TO ENSURE AN ATTRACTIVE MINING SECTOR FOR INCREASED INVESTMENT AND OUTPUT, OUR ADMINISTRATION IS UNDERTAKING REGULATORY AND STRUCTURAL REFORMS THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE INCREASE AND DIVERSIFICATION OF MINERAL PRODUCTION IN THE COUNTRY.

42. TO THIS END, GOVERNMENT IS ESTABLISHING A MINERALS REGULATORY COMMISSION TO SUPERINTEND OVER THE SECTOR, PROMOTE INVESTMENTS AND ENSURE THE COUNTRY GETS MAXIMUM BENEFIT FROM ITS MINERAL RESOURCES.

MADAM SPEAKER,

43. TO SUPPORT INVESTMENTS AND DIVERSIFICATION IN EXPLORATION, MINING AND PROCESSING OF MINERALS, OUR ADMINISTRATION WILL EMBARK ON A NATIONAL GEOLOGICAL MAPPING EXERCISE OF THE COUNTRY. THIS WILL ENABLE US TO GET ACCURATE DATA ON OUR MINERAL RESOURCE ENDOWMENT.

44. GOVERNMENT IS FORMALISING ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE MINING TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION OF OUR CITIZENS IN THE MINING SECTOR. WE URGE ALL OUR CITIZENS INVOLVED IN SMALL-SCALE MINING TO ENSURE THAT THEY FORMALISE THEIR BUSINESSES AND COMPLY WITH RELEVANT LAWS AND REGULATIONS.

MADAM SPEAKER,

45. TOURISM IS A SECTOR THAT WE BELIEVE WILL INCREASE THE NUMBER OF JOBS IN THE COUNTRY AND ENHANCE OUR FOREIGN RESERVES. WE ARE HAPPY THAT POST THE COVID-19 ERA, THE SECTOR HAS CONTINUED TO REGISTER POSITIVE GROWTH.

46. OUR COUNTRY RECORDED AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL TOURIST ARRIVALS TO **605,650** IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2023 COMPARED TO **496,456** IN THE CORRESPONDING PERIOD OF 2022. THIS IS AS A RESULT OF OUR DELIBERATE POLICY ON WAIVING OF VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR VISITORS, COUPLED WITH ROBUST MARKETING OF THE COUNTRY AND OTHER MEASURES.

47. FURTHER, THE NUMBER OF DOMESTIC VISITS TO TOURISM SITES INCREASED TO **301,758** IN 2022 FROM **235,392** IN 2021. WE ENCOURAGE MORE OF OUR PEOPLE TO VISIT OUR NATIONAL PARKS, MUSEUMS, HERITAGE AND OTHER TOURIST SITES TO ENJOY OUR BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY. WE ALSO CALL UPON TOUR OPERATORS TO DESIGN PACKAGES THAT ARE AFFORDABLE FOR ORDINARY ZAMBIANS. WE ENCOURAGE THE TOUR OPERATORS TO CONSIDER MAKING PROVISIONS THAT ALLOW THE ELDERLY AND DIFFERENTLY-ABLED TO AS WELL VISIT THESE TOURIST SITES.

48. IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE THE TOURISM SECTOR MORE COMPETITIVE AND RESILIENT RETENTION FEES FOR TOURISM ENTERPRISES HAVE BEEN ABOLISHED TO REDUCE THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS.

MADAME SPEAKER

49. THE AVIATION SUB-SECTOR HAS CONTINUED TO REBOUND, POST COVID-19. THE NUMBER OF AIRLINES FLYING INTO THE COUNTRY AND THE FREQUENCY OF FLIGHTS BY LOCAL AND FOREIGN AIRLINES HAVE INCREASED. RECENTLY, WE WITNESSED THE INTRODUCTION OF LAM-MOZAMBICAN AIRLINES INTO LUSAKA AS WELL AS THE RE-INTRODUCTION OF TURKISH AIRLINES.

50. SIMILARLY, OUR LOCAL AIRLINE OPERATORS HAVE NOW EXTENDED THEIR FLIGHTS INTO THE REGION MAKING OUR COUNTRY MORE CONNECTED.

MADAM SPEAKER,

51. OUR ADMINISTRATION HAS CREATED AN ENABLING BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT AND IS PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INNOVATION AND VALUE ADDITION ACROSS ALL SECTORS. TO FACILITATE INVESTMENT, WE HAVE DIGITIZED THE ISSUANCE OF INVESTMENT LICENCES AND PERMITS, CUTTING ON TIME AND BUREAUCRACY.

52. THE PREVAILING CONDUCIVE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT HAS LED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MANUFACTURING ENTERPRISES IN VARIOUS SECTORS NOTABLY FERTILISER, PHARMACEUTICAL, VETERINARY MEDICINE AND OTHERS.

53. THIS SECTOR IS CONTRIBUTING TO DIRECT AND INDIRECT JOB CREATION. WITH THE LOCAL MANUFACTURING OF GOODS, WE ANTICIPATE LOWER AND STABLE PRICES OF COMMODITIES. FOR EXAMPLE, BASAL DRESSING UNDER FISP, THE COUNTRY PAID PER METRIC TONNE **US\$1,265** IN 2021/2022 AND **US\$880** IN 2022/2023 SEASONS RESULTING IN A SAVING OF ABOUT **US\$56 MILLION**.

IN ORDER TO FURTHER ENCOURAGE LOCAL MANUFACTURING OF GOODS, WE WILL CONTINUE IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY OF POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION IN THE GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT PROCESS BY BUYING FROM LOCAL MANUFACTURERS AND OTHER VALUE ADDING BUSINESSES.

MADAM SPEAKER,

54. WE ARE EQUALLY COMMITTED TO ACCELERATING THE GROWTH OF VIABLE SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES. IN THIS REGARD, GOVERNMENT HAS INCREASED ACCESS TO FINANCE FOR THE SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES THROUGH THE CITIZENS ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT COMMISSION (CEEC) AND THE ENHANCED CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND (CDF).

55. SO FAR IN 2023, OVER **77,000** MICRO SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED WITH VARIOUS LOANS, INCLUDING MARKETEEER BOOSTER LOANS, BUSULU LOANS AND TRADE FINANCE.

56. YOUR GOVERNMENT IS PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THESE FACILITIES ARE IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS OF OUR PEOPLE.

MADAM SPEAKER,

57. TO REDUCE RISK FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES THAT ACCESS FINANCING, GOVERNMENT INCREASED THE BUDGETARY ALLOCATION TO THE ZAMBIA CREDIT GUARANTEE SCHEME TO **K150 MILLION** IN 2023 FROM **K50 MILLION** IN 2022. THIS RESULTED IN **36** SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES ACCESSING AFFORDABLE FINANCING FROM COMMERCIAL BANKS UNDER GUARANTEES IN THE FIRST HALF OF THIS YEAR.

58. WE ASK THE FINANCIAL SECTOR TO PARTNER WITH GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE FAVOURABLE LENDING RATES TO OUR EMERGING AND THRIVING ENTREPRENEURS. WE WANT MORE OF OUR CITIZENS, ESPECIALLY OUR WOMEN AND YOUTH, TO PARTICIPATE IN BUSINESS ACTIVITIES.

59. WE WILL CONTINUE SEEKING LOCAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MARKET LINKAGES FOR OUR SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES TO HELP OUR PEOPLE GROW THEIR BUSINESSES.

MADAM SPEAKER,

60. IN OUR LAST ADDRESS TO THIS AUGUST HOUSE, WE INDICATED THAT GOVERNMENT WAS LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS TO ESTABLISH INNOVATION HUBS IN THE COUNTRY.

61. WE ARE GLAD TO REPORT THAT GOVERNMENT IS FACILITATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INNOVATION HUB IN NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCE. THIS WILL ENSURE THAT DIGITAL AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS AMONG THE YOUTH ARE HARNESSSED AND ENHANCED FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

62. WE URGE MORE PRIVATE SECTOR PLAYERS TO PARTNER WITH GOVERNMENT IN ESTABLISHING MORE OF SUCH HUBS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

MADAM SPEAKER,

63. GOVERNMENT IS PUTTING IN PLACE VARIOUS INTERVENTIONS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE EXISTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH IN THE ENERGY SECTOR.

64. THE ELECTRICITY SUB-SECTOR RECORDED AN INCREASE IN THE NATIONAL INSTALLED GENERATION CAPACITY AT **3,790 MEGAWATTS**, DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THIS YEAR, FROM **3,306 MEGAWATTS** IN 2021. COMPLETION AND COMMISSIONING OF THE KAFUE GORGE LOWER HYDRO-POWER STATION AND THE RIVERSIDE SOLAR PLANT BY THE COPPERBELT ENERGY CORPORATION, WERE THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS.

MADAM SPEAKER,

65. IN AN EFFORT TO SCALE UP INVESTMENT IN RENEWABLE ENERGY, OUR NATIONAL POWER UTILITY COMPANY, ZESCO, HAS SIGNED SEVERAL POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENTS WITH VARIOUS LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL INVESTORS. WE ARE NOW ABLE TO AGREE A PPAs IN DAYS AS OPPOSED TO MANY YEARS IN THE PAST.

66. OUR DESIRE IS TO ENSURE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE AND SUSTAINABLE ELECTRICITY FOR OUR PEOPLE THROUGH, INCREASED PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. COST REFLECTIVENESS IN THE ELECTRICITY SUB-SECTOR WILL ATTRACT MORE INVESTMENT AND CONTRIBUTE TO OUR GOAL OF ENERGY SUFFICIENCY AND SURPLUS.

67. TO PROMOTE COMPETITION AND ALLOW FOR NON-DISCRIMINATORY ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION INFRASTRUCTURE BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR, GOVERNMENT IS IN THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTING AN OPEN ACCESS REGIME. PRIVATE SECTOR PLAYERS WILL BE ABLE TO WHEEL POWER TO THEIR CUSTOMERS AND WILL ALSO HELP REMOVE ZESCO FROM ENTERING INTO UNSUSTAINABLE POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENTS.

MADAM SPEAKER,

68. UPON ASSUMING OFFICE, WE COMMITTED TO GUARANTEEING SECURITY OF SUPPLY OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS. TO ACHIEVE THIS GOVERNMENT HAS DISENGAGED FROM PROCURING AND FINANCING PETROLEUM PRODUCTS TO ALLOW MORE PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN THE SUPPLY CHAIN. A STRUCTURED AND COORDINATED SYSTEM IS BEING IMPLEMENTED FOR IMPORTING PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AT A COMPETITIVE PRICE TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY.

69. TO MITIGATE THE HIGH PRICES OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS ON ACCOUNT OF GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN PRICES, THE GOVERNMENT HAS OPERATIONALISED THE TAZAMA PIPELINE TO TRANSPORT LOW SULPHUR DIESEL MEETING 80% OF ZAMBIA'S DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION. WE ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE CHALLENGES BEING FACED IN THIS SECTOR AND HOW THESE ARE AFFECTING LOCAL BUSINESS AND OUR CITIZENS HENCE THE EFFORTS GOVERNMENT IS MAKING TO ADDRESS THESE.

MADAM SPEAKER,

70. THE IMPORTANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE FOR OUR COUNTRY CANNOT BE OVER-EMPHASISED. TO THIS END, THE GOVERNMENT IS CONSTRUCTING AND REHABILITATING PUBLIC ROADS AND BRIDGES, MAINLY THROUGH THE PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FINANCING MODEL AWAY FROM THE NATIONAL BALANCE SHEET AND DEBT. THIS IS INGENUITY AT WORK.

71. USING THIS MODEL, WE ARE CONSTRUCTING THE **35**-KILOMETRE CHINGOLA-KASUMBALESA ROAD AND WORKS ON THE **327**-KILOMETRE LUSAKA-NDOLA DUAL CARRIAGEWAY HAVE COMMENCED. NEGOTIATIONS ARE STILL UNDERWAY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NDOLA-MUFULIRA, MUFULIRA-MOKAMBO AND KATETE-CHANIDA ROADS. MANY MORE WILL FOLLOW.

72. WE HAVE CONTINUED REHABILITATING AND MAINTAINING RURAL ROADS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. CURRENTLY, OVER **1,700 KM** OF THESE ROADS HAVE BEEN REHABILITATED AND MAINTAINED IN CENTRAL, NORTHERN, LUAPULA, EASTERN, SOUTHERN AND MUCHINGA PROVINCES. FURTHER, WORKS ON **2,900 KM** WILL COMMENCE IN THE SAME PROVINCES. WESTERN, NORTH-WESTERN AND COPPERBELT PROVINCES WILL SOON COME ON BOARD.

THROUGH THE PURCHASE OF BUILDING AND ROADS EQUIPMENT UNDER THE ENHANCED CDF, CONSTITUENCIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY WILL BE ABLE TO CONSTRUCT AND MAINTAIN MORE FEEDER ROADS ON A ROUTINE BASIS.

MADAM SPEAKER,

73. THE CONSTRUCTION AND UPGRADING OF AVIATION INFRASTRUCTURE IN OUR PROVINCIAL AND STRATEGIC AIRPORTS HAS BEEN PRIORITISED. AS A START,

WE HAVE CONSTRUCTED A THREE-KILOMETRE RUNWAY AND REHABILITATED THE TERMINAL BUILDING AT KASAMA AIRPORT.

74. THE KASAMA AIRPORT CAN NOW ACCOMMODATE LARGER AIRCRAFT AND IS POISED TO ENHANCE TOURISM, MINING, AGRICULTURE AND INCREASE TRADE AND INVESTMENT IN THE NORTHERN CIRCUIT TO SPUR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

75. GOING FORWARD, ALL PROVINCIAL AIRPORTS WILL BE FURNISHED WITH IMPROVED RUNWAYS, AIRFIELD GROUND LIGHTING SYSTEMS, STARTING WITH KASAMA AIRPORT THIS YEAR, TO ENHANCE AVIATION SAFETY AND SECURITY. THIS WILL BE FOLLOWED BY SOLWEZI AND MANSA SUBSEQUENTLY OTHER AIRPORTS.

76. FURTHER, WE ATTACH GREAT IMPORTANCE TO OUR TRADITIONAL LEADERS HENCE CONSTRUCTING PALACES FOR ALL OF THEM ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MADAM SPEAKER,

77. THE UPND NEW DAWN GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO BUILD ON GAINS MADE IN EDUCATION, HEALTH AS WELL AS WATER AND SANITATION SECTORS. OUR ADMINISTRATION IS ALSO ADDRESSING VULNERABILITY AND INEQUALITY AMONG OUR PEOPLE.

78. OUR FREE EDUCATION POLICY HAS CREATED OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CITIZENS TO ACCESS EDUCATION. TO AVOID COMPROMISING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO INCREASE LEARNING SPACES. THE CONSTRUCTION OF **149** SECONDARY SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY HAS SINCE

BEEN COMPLETED AND ALL THE SCHOOLS ARE NOW OPERATIONAL. IN ADDITION, **132** EARLY CHILDHOOD AND **61** SECONDARY SCHOOLS ARE AT VARIOUS LEVELS OF COMPLETION.

79. FURTHER, GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO PROCURE DESKS THROUGH VARIOUS FORMS OF FINANCING, SUCH AS THE CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND. AS AT JULY 2023, A TOTAL NUMBER OF **373,848** DESKS HAD BEEN PROCURED, OUT OF WHICH **353,120** WERE PROCURED THROUGH THE CDF. ABOUT **747,696** PUPILS ARE NOW LEARNING WHILE **SEATED ON DESKS**. UNLIKE BEFORE, ALL THESE DESKS ARE BEING PRODUCED LOCALLY BY OUR CITIZENS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. CREATING THE MUCH NEEDED JOBS AND SAVING ON FOREIGN EXCHANGE.

80. TEACHERS ARE A CRITICAL COMPONENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR NATION. IN THIS REGARD, GOVERNMENT WILL THIS YEAR, RECRUIT **4,500** TEACHERS TO FURTHER REDUCE THE TEACHER DEFICIT IN OUR SCHOOLS.

MADAM SPEAKER,

81. TO EQUIP OUR CHILDREN WITH LIFELONG AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION, GOVERNMENT IS PLACING EQUAL EMPHASIS ON BUILDING PRACTICAL SKILLS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED BY INDUSTRY.

82. ENROLMENTS IN OUR SKILLS TRAINING CENTRES HAVE INCREASED DUE TO THE POLICY MEASURES BEING IMPLEMENTED BY GOVERNMENT. IN 2022, **76,500** WERE ENROLLED IN VARIOUS FIELDS, IN TEVET INSTITUTIONS AND YOUTH RESOURCE CENTRES. THE NUMBER HAS RISEN TO **86,700** IN 2023. OUT OF THOSE ENROLLED IN THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES, ABOUT **47,000** HAVE BEEN SPONSORED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL ACROSS THE COUNTRY UNDER THE CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND.

MADAM SPEAKER,

83. GOVERNMENT, THIS YEAR, REINTRODUCED MEAL ALLOWANCES TO IMPROVE THE WELFARE OF STUDENTS IN OUR UNIVERSITIES. AS A RESULT, **32,000** STUDENTS ARE BENEFITING FROM THIS POLICY DECISION.

84. WE REITERATE OUR LONG-HELD POSITION THAT EDUCATION IS THE BEST INHERITANCE, INVESTMENT AND BEST EQUALISER.

MADAM SPEAKER,

85. HEALTHCARE REMAINS CENTRAL TO OUR STRATEGY OF ENSURING BETTER LIVES FOR OUR PEOPLE. TO IMPROVE ACCESS AND QUALITY HEALTHCARE FOR OUR CITIZENS, GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO CONSTRUCT HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

86. DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW, **43** MATERNITY ANNEXES AND **11** MINI-HOSPITALS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED, BRINGING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF MINI-HOSPITALS CONSTRUCTED TO **110**, OUT OF THE TARGETED **115**. IN LINE WITH OUR EARLIER PROUNCEMENTS, AN ADDITION OF **26** MATERNITY ANNEXES WILL BE COMPLETED BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR. WE HAVE COMMITTED THAT EVERY HEALTH CENTRE HAS A MATERNITY ANNEX WITH WATER RETICULATION.

87. FURTHER, TO IMPROVE ATTENTION ACCORDED TO PATIENTS, GOVERNMENT WILL THIS YEAR, RECRUIT **3,000** HEALTH WORKERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

MADAM SPEAKER,

88. GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE SUPPLY OF ESSENTIAL MEDICINES AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES IN OUR HEALTH FACILITIES HAS BEEN INADEQUATE. TO ADDRESS THIS, WE ARE STREAMLINING THE PROCUREMENT PROCESSES FOR ESSENTIAL MEDICINES AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES. IN ADDITION, WE INVITE THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS BY SETTING UP LOCAL PRODUCTION OF MEDICINES AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES.

89. THE DISEASE BURDEN AMONG OUR PEOPLE IS OF GREAT CONCERN TO GOVERNMENT. WE ARE THEREFORE, COMMITTED TO PREVENTING, CONTROLLING AND TREATING BOTH COMMUNICABLE AND NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES.

90. GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO PRIORITISE THE FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA, HIV AND AIDS, CANCERS, MENTAL ILLNESS AND MALNUTRITION, AMONG OTHERS. WE ARE ALSO SCALING UP EFFORTS TO REDUCE MATERNAL AND NEONATAL MORTALITIES, WHICH ARE UNACCEPTABLY HIGH.

MADAM SPEAKER,

91. AS PART OF OUR COMMITMENT TO HAVE CLEAN AND SAFE WATER SUPPLY AND ADEQUATE SANITATION FACILITIES IN EVERY COMMUNITY, WE ARE MAKING STEADY PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION PROGRAMME. WE ARE ALSO IMPLEMENTING PROGRAMMES UNDER THE NATIONAL URBAN WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION PROGRAMME ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

92. THE CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND HAS PROVIDED YET ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR COMMUNITIES TO ACCESS CLEAN AND SAFE WATER SUPPLY AS WELL AS ADEQUATE SANITATION.

MADAM SPEAKER,

- 93.** GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF OUR VULNERABLE PEOPLE BY IMPLEMENTING ENHANCED SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES, SUCH AS THE SOCIAL CASH TRANSFER AND FOOD SECURITY PACK.
- 94.** UNDER THE SOCIAL CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMME, WE INCREASED THE NUMBER OF BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS, ACROSS THE COUNTRY, TO **1,027,000** (ONE MILLION AND TWENTY-SEVEN THOUSAND) IN 2022 FROM **887,759** IN 2021. NUMBERS TELL THE STORY BETTER.
- 95.** AS AT JUNE 2023, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS ROSE TO **1,100,998** (ONE MILLION, ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND, NINE HUNDRED AND NINETY-EIGHT). THIS TRANSLATES TO ABOUT **5.3 MILLION** PEOPLE BENEFITING FROM THIS LIFE SUSTAINING INTERVENTION. BY THE END OF THIS YEAR, WE ARE WORKING TO REACH THE TARGET OF **1,374,500** (ONE MILLION, THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR THOUSAND, FIVE HUNDRED) BENEFICIARY HOUSEHOLDS.
- 96.** IT IS GRATIFYING TO NOTE THAT FROM THE TIME WE ASSUMED OFFICE IN 2021, PAYMENTS OF SOCIAL CASH TRANSFERS TO BENEFICIARIES HAVE BEEN CONSISTENT AND TIMELY. PREDICTABILITY OF PAYMENTS IS IMPORTANT IN BUILDING RESILIENCE AND PROTECTING HOUSEHOLDS FROM SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS.
- 97.** TO IMPROVE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE SOCIAL CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMME, WE ARE DIGITISING THE PAYMENT SYSTEM. THIS IS MAINLY TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THIS PROGRAMME.

MADAM SPEAKER,

- 98.** GOVERNMENT, THROUGH THE FOOD SECURITY PACK PROGRAMME, HAS CONTINUED TO PROVIDE BASIC FARMING INPUTS, SUCH AS SEEDS AND FERTILIZER TO VULNERABLE BUT VIABLE FARMERS. THE PROGRAMME IS CURRENTLY SUPPORTING **200,000** HOUSEHOLDS UNDER THE RAIN-FED FARMING COMPONENT, **40,000** THROUGH THE WETLAND FARMING COMPONENT AND **2,000** UNDER THE ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD INTERVENTION.
- 99.** TO FURTHER ADDRESS VULNERABILITY AND INEQUALITIES AMONG WOMEN AND THE YOUTH, GOVERNMENT IS IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL INTERNSHIP, APPRENTICESHIP, VOLUNTEER AND GRADUATE PROGRAMME. OVER **2,000** YOUTHS ARE DUE FOR PLACEMENT IN VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS THIS YEAR.
- 100.** THROUGH OUR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES, **4,100** YOUTH WERE EMPOWERED WITH GRANTS TO ENABLE THEM ENGAGE IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES. SIMILARLY, **15** YOUTH COOPERATIVES AND **105** YOUTH ENTERPRISES WERE EMPOWERED WITH MOTORBIKES IN EASTERN PROVINCE THIS YEAR. WE EXPECT THE BENEFICIARIES TO WORK HARD AND PAY BACK THE LOANS TO ALLOW OTHERS TO ALSO BENEFIT.
- 101.** THE ENHANCED CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND HAS SO FAR BENEFITED OVER **5,600** YOUTH, WOMEN AND COMMUNITY GROUPS WITH EMPOWERMENT LOANS. IN ADDITION, **36,700** GROUPS, FOR VULNERABLE YOUTH AND WOMEN, HAVE BENEFITED FROM EMPOWERMENT GRANTS. WE HAVE ALSO PROVIDED SECONDARY BOARDING SCHOOL BURSARIES TO OVER **40,200** LEARNERS.

MADAM SPEAKER,

102. UNDER CONTRIBUTORY SOCIAL PROTECTION, WE AMENDED THE NATIONAL PENSION SCHEME ACT NO. 28 OF 1996 TO PROVIDE FOR THE PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL OF PENSION BENEFITS. AS OF 31ST JULY, 2023, **K8.1 BILLION** HAD BEEN PAID TO **365,192** MEMBERS.

103. FURTHER, WE REDUCED THE PENALTY RATE FOR NON-REMITTANCE OF PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS FROM **20 PERCENT** TO **10 PERCENT** IN ORDER TO IMPROVE COMPLIANCE. WE HAVE ALSO INTRODUCED PENALTY WAIVERS TO ASSIST EMPLOYERS STRUGGLING TO FULFIL STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS TO CONTINUE OPERATING AND PREVENT JOB LOSSES.

MADAM SPEAKER,

104. SPORT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTE TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE YOUTH. DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW, GOVERNMENT INCREASED SUPPORT TOWARDS SPORTS DEVELOPMENT.

105. WE SUPPORTED OVER **5,000** YOUTH IN VARIOUS SPORTS DISCIPLINES. THE SUPPORT COMPRISED AIR TICKETS, SPORTS ATTIRE, ACCOMMODATION AND ALLOWANCES, AMONG OTHERS, TO ENABLE THEM PARTICIPATE IN VARIOUS TOURNAMENTS.

106. WE ARE PROUD OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS SO FAR RECORDED HERE AT HOME AND ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE. WE WISH TO ONCE AGAIN TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONGRATULATE THE COPPER QUEENS ON THEIR MAIDEN QUALIFICATION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE 2023 FIFA WOMEN'S WORLD CUP TOURNAMENT. WE FURTHER CONGRATULATE THE CHIPOLOPOLO BOYS FOR

QUALIFYING TO THE 2023 AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS AFTER MISSING THE LAST THREE EDITIONS.

107. WE ALSO CONGRATULATE ALL THOSE WHO HAVE EXCELLED AND HAVE BEEN AWARDED MEDALS IN OTHER SPORTING DISCIPLINES. WE REITERATE THAT OUR POLICY CONTINUES TO ENCOURAGE EQUAL SUPPORT IN ALL SPORTS. THERE IS NO MINOR SPORT. WE URGE ALL OUR SPORTSMEN AND WOMEN TO BUILD ON THE GAINS WE HAVE MADE AND CONTINUE TO FLY THE ZAMBIAN FLAG HIGH. WE WILL CONTINUE TO CHEER YOU ON.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

MADAM SPEAKER,

108. OUR UPND ADMINISTRATION IS COMMITTED TO ACHIEVING ECONOMIC GROWTH THAT IS ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE. WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO THE GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE AGENDA AND THE PRUDENT MANAGEMENT OF OUR ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

109. TO THIS END, WE DEVELOPED AN IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK TO FAST-TRACK NATIONAL CLIMATE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES. THIS PROVIDES FOR A COORDINATED APPROACH IN IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS BY DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY.

MADAM SPEAKER,

110. WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS IN REVERSING FOREST AND LAND DEGRADATION. DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW, **20,000** HECTARES OF DEGRADED RANGELANDS HAVE BEEN RESTORED.

111. IN ADDITION, GOVERNMENT FACILITATED THE RESTORATION OF **110** HECTARES OF DEGRADED LAND IN MINING AREAS, RESULTING IN A SIX PERCENT REDUCTION IN LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY.

112. IN AN EFFORT TO RESTORE FOREST COVER IN THE COUNTRY, A TOTAL OF **6,722** HECTARES OF FOREST WAS PLANTED IN THE 2022/2023 TREE PLANTING SEASON. IN ADDITION, GOVERNMENT HAS OPERATIONALISED THE FOREST DEVELOPMENT FUND TO ENHANCE MANAGEMENT OF FORESTS.

MADAM SPEAKER,

113. GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED WITH THE HIGH LEVELS OF POLLUTION AND THE INDISCRIMINATE DISPOSAL OF WASTE IN THE COUNTRY. TO THIS END, WE HAVE PARTNERED WITH VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS ON WASTE MANAGEMENT AIMED AT STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICAL AND OTHER WASTE.

114. WE REQUIRE OUR LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE GARBAGE DISPOSAL SERVICES IN CONVENIENT PLACES FOR A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT. REMEMBER, A CLEAN ZAMBIA BEGINS WITH EACH ONE OF US.

115. GOVERNMENT IS CALLING FOR INVESTMENT IN THE RECYCLING, ESPECIALLY THAT OF PLASTIC, TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY. LOCAL AUTHORITIES SHOULD SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENTER INTO PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPLEMENT INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR MANAGING WASTE, WHILE GENERATING LOCAL REVENUES.

MADAM SPEAKER,

116. TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING, WE HAVE DEVELOPED AN ONLINE AUTOMATED INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM CALLED E-ZEMA. THIS WILL IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN ENVIRONMENTAL LICENCING, ASSESSMENTS, COMPLAINT AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT.

GOOD GOVERNANCE ENVIRONMENT

MADAM SPEAKER,

117. IN LINE WITH OUR COMMITMENT OF TAKING SERVICES AND DECISION-MAKING CLOSER TO OUR PEOPLE, THE NATIONAL DECENTRALISATION POLICY HAS BEEN REVISED AND IMPLEMENTATION HAS COMMENCED IN EARNEST.

118. THE DEVOLUTION OF PUBLIC SERVICES TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES IS UNDERWAY. EIGHT EXCLUSIVE LOCAL AUTHORITY FUNCTIONS PREVIOUSLY PERFORMED BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES, AS PROVIDED FOR IN THE CONSTITUTION. THESE INCLUDE DISTRICT HEALTH SERVICES, LIVESTOCK SERVICES AND VEHICLE LICENSING.

119. SO FAR, **34,963** CIVIL SERVANTS PERFORMING THE DEVOLVED FUNCTIONS HAVE BEEN ATTACHED TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES. IN ADDITION, MINISTRIES WITH DEVOLVED FUNCTIONS HAVE COMMENCED THE TRANSFER OF ASSETS TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

120. TO ENHANCE EFFICIENCY IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND PROJECTS, GOVERNMENT HAS DELEGATED THE POWERS TO APPROVE PROJECTS TO THE PROVINCES, FROM THE MINISTRY OF LOCAL

GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT. GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO PROCURED MOTOR VEHICLES FOR MONITORING CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND PROJECTS.

121. GOVERNMENT IS REVIEWING THE CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND ACT NO. 11 OF 2018 TO ENHANCE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE MANAGEMENT, DISBURSEMENT AND UTILISATION OF THE FUND.

122. FURTHER, GOVERNMENT WILL CONSTRUCT CONSTITUENCY OFFICES ACROSS THE COUNTRY USING THE CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUND (CDF). THIS IS IN LINE WITH THE UPND NEW DAWN ADMINISTRATION DECENTRALISATION POLICY OF ENHANCING CITIZENS PARTICIPATION.

123. CURRENTLY, ONE HUNDRED AND ELEVEN CONSTITUENCIES HAVE NO OFFICES ACROSS THE COUNTRY. IN THIS REGARD, WE EXPECT ALL HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WHOSE CONSTITUENCIES HAVE NO OFFICES TO ACQUIRE LAND, PLACE IT ON TITLE WHERE THE OFFICES WILL BE CONSTRUCTED. WE DIRECT THE MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT TO TAKE NECESSARY MEASURES THROUGH A ONCE OFF PAYMENT FROM THE CDF TOWARDS THE CONSTRUCTION OF THESE CONSTITUENCY OFFICES.

FURTHER, WE DIRECT THE MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT TO MAKE THE NECESSARY LEGISLATIVE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WILL PAVE WAY FOR ALL MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO BELONG TO THE LOCAL COUNCILS IN ORDER TO ENHANCE DECENTRALISATION.

MADAM SPEAKER,

COUNCILLORS RENUMERATION

124. THE UPND GOVERNMENT IS WORKING ON IMPROVING THE RENUMERATION PACKAGE FOR ALL COUNCILLORS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. THIS IS TO ENHANCE AND STRENGTHEN OUR DECENTRALISATION POLICY.

MADAM SPEAKER,

125. WE STAND STRONG IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION. INVESTIGATIONS ON CASES OF CORRUPTION AND RECOVERY OF STOLEN ASSETS HAVE BEEN INTENSIFIED. OUR FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IS NOT POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. WE WILL CONTINUE TO BE FAIR AND RELENTLESS IN FIGHTING PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE CORRUPTION. THERE SHOULD BE NO SYMPATHY FOR THE CORRUPT IN OUR SOCIETY IF WE HAVE TO SECURE OUR COUNTRY'S FUTURE.

MADAM SPEAKER,

126. TO ENABLE AS MANY ELIGIBLE CITIZENS AS POSSIBLE TO EXERCISE THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO VOTE, THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF ZAMBIA HAS CONTINUED TO CONDUCT CONTINUOUS REGISTRATION OF VOTERS IN THE 10 PROVINCIAL CENTRES.

127. FROM 1ST JUNE, 2022 TO 31ST MAY 2023, A TOTAL OF **17,913** VOTERS WERE REGISTERED, OF WHICH **10,024** WERE MALE AND **7,889** WERE FEMALE.

MADAM SPEAKER,

128. OUR FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY, TRADE AND INVESTMENT ON ONE PART AND PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY ON THE OTHER. SOME OF OUR GAINS FROM THIS POLICY HAS RESULTED IN THE INCREASED FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENTS, ENHANCED TRADE AND THE DEBT RESTRUCTURING AGREEMENT.

129. AS THE CURRENT CHAIR OF COMESA AND THE SADC ORGAN ON POLITICS, DEFENCE AND SECURITY COOPERATION, ZAMBIA WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE REGIONAL AGENDA ON ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AS WELL AS PEACE AND SECURITY.

CONCLUSION

MADAM SPEAKER,

130. THE UPND NEW DAWN ADMINISTRATION REMAINS COMMITTED TO SERVING WITH DILIGENCE, IN AN ORDERLY MANNER, THE TWENTY MILLION ZAMBIANS. TODAY, OUR PEOPLE HAVE A GOVERNMENT THAT IS VISIONARY, STABLE AND TRULY COMMITTED TO PROGRESS.

131. A GOVERNMENT THAT BELIEVES IN THE RULE OF LAW AND ABHORS CORRUPTION. A GOVERNMENT THAT CHERISHES HARD WORK, INTEGRITY AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT. A GOVERNMENT THAT RESPECTS, PROTECTS AND VALUES THE COUNTRY'S RESOURCES.

132. WE ARE MAKING GREAT STRIDES AND CONSOLIDATING OUR GAINS IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND GOVERNANCE SPHERES. WE HAVE SUCCEEDED IN RESTRUCTURING OUR DEBT TO A POINT WHERE WE ARE ABLE TO PAY BACK WITHOUT COMPROMISING OUR ABILITY TO DELIVER ON OUR OBLIGATIONS TO OUR PEOPLE. OUR DECENTRALISED DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNANCE AGENDA HAS TAKEN ROOT AND IS BEARING FRUIT ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

133. WE MUST CONTINUE TO WORK HARD. WE MUST CONTINUE TO BE PRAGMATIC AND LEARN TO LIVE WITHIN OUR MEANS. WE MUST ALL BE HONEST WITH OURSELVES AND IN OUR RELATIONS WITH EACH OTHER AS WELL AS IN RUNNING PUBLIC AFFAIRS. WE MUST CONTINUE TO PURSUE ACTIVITIES OF VALUE TO OUR DEVELOPMENT AGENDA. REMEMBER, ONLY ACTION BRINGS ABOUT WORTHWHILE CHANGE.

MADAM SPEAKER,

134. THE FORWARD MARCH TO PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY MUST CONTINUE. THE ROAD MAY BE BUMPY, BUT WE ARE ON COURSE. OURS IS COLLECTIVELY A WINNING TEAM.

135. WE ARE DETERMINED TO IMPROVE THE LIVELIHOODS OF OUR PEOPLE. WE ARE DETERMINED TO DELIVER A BETTER ZAMBIA FOR ALL. A ZAMBIA THAT IS UNITED, PROSPEROUS AND EQUITABLE.

MADAM SPEAKER,

136. WE NOW HAVE THE PLEASURE TO DECLARE THE THIRD SESSION OF THE THIRTEENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OFFICIALLY OPENED.

137. GOD BLESS US ALL.

138. GOD BLESS OUR BELOVED COUNTRY, ZAMBIA.

MADAM SPEAKER,

139. WE THANK YOU.