



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

ADDRESS

BY

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

ON

**THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE APPLICATION OF NATIONAL
VALUES AND PRINCIPLES**

DELIVERED

**TO THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE THIRTEENTH NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY**

ON

FRIDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY 2026

Madam speaker,

Good morning,

In accordance with article 9 (2) of the constitution of the Republic of Zambia, we are pleased to join this august house to report on progress made in the application of our national values and principles.

Madam speaker,

We take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome the newly elected member of parliament for Chawama constituency, Hon. Bright Nundwe, following the by-election, held on Thursday, 15th January 2026, which passed without violence.

We urge the honourable member of parliament to effectively represent the people of Chawama constituency with honour and responsibility.

Madam speaker,

During this session, the house was privileged to host his excellency Mr. John Dramani Mahama, president of the republic of Ghana, on Thursday, 5th February, 2026.

In his special address to this august house, President Mahama reaffirmed the warm, cordial and historical bilateral relations that exist between our two countries and peoples.

President Mahama reminded us that our democracies have been built through sacrifice and resilience, anchored on African values.

The visit re-affirmed the spirit of Pan-Africanism as espoused by our founding fathers, Dr. Kenneth David Buchizya Kaunda and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah.

Madam speaker,

As a nation, we have continued to embrace our national values and principles, which are specified in the constitution, under article 8, as follows:

- I. Morality and ethics;
- II. Patriotism and national unity;
- III. Democracy and constitutionalism;
- IV. Human dignity, equity, social justice, equality and non-discrimination;
- V. Good governance and integrity; and
- VI. Sustainable development.

Madam speaker,

These national values and principles are not just a constitutional requirement for us, but a moral compass that shapes our character and defines our identity.

They provide guidance in our policy formulation and form a bedrock for the implementation of our policies.

Madam speaker,

We will now proceed to highlight the progress made in the application of our national values and principles, with the recognition that we all have much more work to do.

Morality and ethics

Madam speaker,

Zambia is a peaceful nation, a caring nation, a Christian nation.

Morality and ethics are important values that shape the character of our families, communities and the nation at large.

It is within this moral and ethical context that this government is addressing social vices, such as alcohol, drug and substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, child marriage and gender-based violence.

To address these vices, we have implemented a number of interventions. These include free education, skills training, empowerment initiatives, and nationwide sensitisation programmes for community members, workers, as well as civic and traditional leaders.

Child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and child defilement continued to be serious social challenges in our society.

No country can realise its potential if its girls and boys are left behind. We can all therefore agree that it is time to end child marriage.

Madam speaker,

To address these social ills, government continues to sensitise traditional leaders and their communities across the country.

In addition, thousands of teenage girls who dropped out of school to get married are now receiving counselling, and are being brought back to school to benefit from our free education policy.

We do this because we love our children, we care about our children, and we will work tirelessly to ensure that all young citizens benefit from the opportunities we are providing.

Madam speaker,

Gender-based violence has remained a public concern in our country. We continue to address this vice through many interventions including the establishment of a national call centre, one stop centres and fast track courts for victims of gender-based violence.

We urge victims, relatives and others, to report all instances of gender based violence. The law must continue to take its course, and perpetrators must be brought to justice.

We commend our traditional leaders, the church and other stakeholders for their support in the fight against these vices.

Madam speaker,

We remain deeply concerned regarding divorce rates in our country. Loving, caring, strong families are the foundations of a responsible and strong nation.

We call upon our partners, traditional leaders, marriage counsellors, religious and civic leaders, to join hands in supporting families and the sanctity of marriage.

Madam speaker,

Human trafficking continues to be a concern given our geographical location. To curb this vice, the United Party for National Development (UPND) New Dawn administration has fully operationalised the department of anti-human trafficking in the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security.

The department, in collaboration with other law enforcement agencies, is leading efforts to totally eradicate human trafficking.

Madam speaker,

Social media has created new opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship, self-expression and information sharing, among others.

Sadly, some of our people are using social media to spread harmful content, fake news, misinformation, disinformation and hate speech. Social media is also being used to commit cyber-crimes and harass innocent citizens.

In this regard, we continue to reform the legal framework to protect the public from harmful online behaviour and cybercrime. We also call upon citizens to ensure that digital platforms are used responsibly and productively.

We continue to be inspired by the online creativity of our innovative and entrepreneurial youth, and we encourage everyone to enjoy the freedoms we have, responsibly.

Patriotism and national unity

Madam Speaker,

Over the last four years, we have made progress in fostering patriotism and national unity.

We have made steady progress in promoting Zambian products, to support businesses and our hardworking and industrious citizens.

Government has also strengthened local content policies. Last year, we issued Statutory Instrument no. 68 of 2025 on promotion of local content in the mining sector.

This has created more opportunities for local suppliers to be awarded contracts, which means more jobs and more income for Zambians.

Public procurement has also been reformed to give special preference and positive discrimination to locally produced goods and services, which again, means more jobs, business opportunities, and income for Zambians and the treasury.

Madam speaker,

To continue the provision of vital services, including nationwide free education, the government depends on effective revenue collection. A responsible and caring society demands a responsible and fair tax system.

Paying our taxes is an attribute of patriotism and mutual responsibility. Government has modernised and simplified tax administration through digital platforms, to make it easier for citizens to meet their obligations.

Madam speaker,

Under the UPND New Dawn administration there has been an unprecedented reduction in political violence and cadreism in our country.

Under our watch, there is no room for political violence. There is no room for cadreism. There is no room for lawlessness. Let me be clear, no one is above the law.

Madam speaker,

This administration has consistently promoted unity in diversity through the principle of **“One Zambia, One Nation, One People”**.

Our efforts are evident in decentralisation and the equitable distribution of national resources to all parts of the country through instruments such as the substantially enhanced constituency development fund (CDF).

A caring and loving Zambian society is one that provides equal opportunities, and distributes resources fairly, without discrimination.

On the cultural front, we are witnessing a positive development, where our Royal Highnesses are increasingly attending each other's traditional ceremonies, an attestation to our unity in diversity.

Last year, we had the honour to meet with all the traditional leaders at the Mulungushi International Conference Center as part of our continued efforts to promote national unity.

This is enhancing the mutual understanding and appreciation of our shared and rich cultural heritage. We are, indeed, One Zambia, One Nation, One People.

Madam speaker,

Democracy and Constitutionalism

Madam speaker,

To enhance our democracy and promote inclusivity in our governance system, we amended the constitution, to ensure fair and equitable representation of our people.

We thank our citizens, across the country, for making valuable submissions to the Mushabati constitutional technical committee.

We also commend this house for successfully passing the bill.

We are proud that women, youth and persons with disabilities will be guaranteed representation at all levels of our governance system for the first time in our country's history.

Parliament, through a mixed member system at local government and national levels, supported this process. The amended constitution provides for an increase in the number of seats in the national assembly.

These reforms mean more support for our communities, more opportunities for women and our youth, and greater access to resources for our most vulnerable Zambians.

Madam speaker,

Our administration remains firm on preserving freedom of assembly and association. There can be no development without peace.

As we approach the 2026 general elections on 13th August 2026, we are committed to ensuring free, fair, credible and peaceful elections.

We should all remember that democracy thrives on ideas, persuasion and respect for divergent views.

We, therefore, implore all the political actors to commit to, and promote, peace, tolerance, and unity.

Let us always choose unity over division. Let us choose dialogue and inclusion over conflict and insults. Let us choose progress over politicking.

Madam speaker,

Our stable and peaceful environment has so far attracted unprecedented investment, which translates to more jobs and more businesses and other opportunities. This is a great achievement, but we still have more work to do.

Madam speaker,

Access to information and media freedom remains fundamental to democratic governance.

Our administration has undertaken legal reforms to modernise the media landscape in the country.

The government passed the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) act no. 26 of 2025 and the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) act no. 26 of 2025.

This is to promote independence, fairness and accountability in broadcasting, while safeguarding press freedom and public interests.

Madam speaker,

Human dignity, equity, social justice, equality and non-discrimination

Madam speaker,

Since 2021, the UPND New Dawn administration has continued to advance human dignity, equity, social justice, equality and non-discrimination, as central pillars of national development.

We have expanded community-driven investment and strengthened social protection. We have empowered the youth and women. We have improved access to education, health, water and justice, the foundations of a loving and caring Zambian society.

Madam speaker,

Once more, our commitment is underscored by the substantial increase in the budget allocation to the CDF, from **k1.6 million** in 2021 to **k40 million** in 2026, per constituency, per year.

Let me repeat, from k1.6 million to k40 million in less than 5 years, and we are going to increase this again next year if, through God's will, the people of Zambia give us another mandate.

Through the CDF, we have empowered the youth, women and the vulnerable in our communities. We have provided bursaries to our learners attending secondary boarding school and for skills development.

This is a giant step in the right direction. And we will not rest until every Zambian family feels the benefit of this generational change.

Madam speaker,

We are delivering for the people of Zambia from a place of love and deep care:

- More health services are now within reach for our communities, with the provision of live-saving ambulances.
- More of our mothers, especially in rural areas, can now deliver in appropriate maternity facilities, with acceptable sanitation facilities.
- More of our children are learning in decent classrooms which now have desks, as opposed to the previous commonplace situation of sitting on the floor.
- More of our students are receiving bursaries and meal allowances.
- More of our health workers and teachers in urban and rural areas are providing critical services to our communities.
- More of our communities can now access clean and safe drinking water.
- More of our traders are conducting their business in modern market facilities, peacefully.

- More of our small-scale livestock farmers can now access dipping facilities, vaccinations and treatment drugs, within their communities.
- More of our communities are becoming safer with the construction of police posts and the provision of vehicles.

Fellow citizens, we commit to continuing to deliver for each and every Zambian citizen, because we love and care for their welfare.

Madam speaker,

Human dignity, equity and social justice cannot be attained without social protection interventions.

We have expanded our social protection programmes across the country. The social cash transfer value for vulnerable household beneficiaries was doubled from **k200** to **k400** per month.

For beneficiary households, where there is a member with a disability, the value has increased from **k400** to **k600** per month.

This year alone, we have increased the number of beneficiary households on social cash transfer from **1.3 Million** to **1.5 Million** countrywide.

Under the food security pack, the number of vulnerable but viable farmers has increased from **240,000** to **320,000** beneficiaries.

We have expanded the cash-for-work programme to cover all the **116** districts across the country, from the initial **84**, which were adversely affected by the drought.

Madam speaker,

Access to clean and safe water, as well as adequate sanitation, is fundamental to our citizen's health, dignity and wellbeing. Government has implemented an array of interventions to expand access to safe water across the country.

Through these interventions, over **4.9 million** citizens have been provided with clean and safe water. This is a significant number, but we are not resting until every Zambian has access to clean water.

Madam speaker,

The UPND New Dawn administration remains firmly committed to addressing economic and social barriers to children's participation and progression in education. In 2021, we re-introduced the free education policy.

As always, education remains the best investment, equaliser, and inheritance.

With the implementation of this policy, we can, today, announce that over **2.5 million** children have been given the opportunity to go back to school.

To ensure access to quality education, we have recruited **41,917** teachers. This year, an additional **2,000** teachers will be recruited.

Madam speaker,

We have also scaled up support to vulnerable girls through the keeping girls in school initiative. The programme benefitted **127,233** girls in 2025, from **38,551** in 2021. The geographic coverage has also increased to **95** districts from **39** in 2021.

In addition, we have strengthened menstrual hygiene management among girls in school. The number of girls supported under this programme increased from **186,670** in 2021 to over **1.7 million** in 2025.

Further, we have expanded the school feeding programme from **1.5 million** in 2021 to **4.7 million** learners in 2025 because we love and care for our people.

Madam speaker,

It is gratifying that these interventions are contributing to improved school attendance, retention and learning outcomes among vulnerable learners, particularly in rural and under-served communities.

In 2025, we recorded an impressive pass rate in public schools of **70 percent** at Grade 12, the highest ever in the history of our country.

This was not an accident, it was the direct outcome of deep, broad, and well-planned policy reforms. We pay tribute to all teachers, pupils and parents on this remarkable achievement.

Madam speaker,

To promote human dignity and equity, the UPND New Dawn government prioritised investment in the health and wellness of our people. Since 2021, we have recruited over **18,000** health workers with an additional **2,000** to be recruited this year.

Further, we have continued to improve access to health services for our citizens through the construction and equipping of health facilities at all levels across the country.

Madam speaker,

To ensure dignity, social justice and non-discrimination in the employment and labour sector, government has undertaken important reforms, including a more transparent public sector recruitment system.

We introduced new measures in the pension system to allow for partial withdrawal of pension benefits.

As of January, this year, **518,183** members of the national pension scheme authority had accessed their **20 percent** partial withdrawal, amounting to **K10.6 billion**. This is tremendous, and it is life changing for our people.

We have also extended pension coverage to the informal sector, which accounts for over 70 percent of our workforce.

We have increased the minimum wage and enhanced legislation on occupational safety and health, in line with our decent work agenda.

This has improved income security, enhanced financial resilience and ensured broader social protection for our citizens.

Madam speaker,

To facilitate the speedy dispensation of justice, government has deployed resident high court judges to all our ten provinces. We have enhanced access to justice by expanding legal aid services to more districts.

Further, we have completed construction, and rehabilitation works of local courts in a number of districts around the country.

Madam speaker,

Our administration remains focused on reducing overcrowding in our correctional facilities to safeguard the dignity of inmates.

Madam speaker,

To promote equality and social justice among our youth, government has been focusing on economic inclusion and skills development.

We continue to implement important youth empowerment programmes under the youth empowerment fund, Citizens Economic Empowerment Commission (CEEC) and CDF.

Madam speaker,

The UPND new dawn administration is focused on promoting equality, social justice and non-discrimination in the provision of electricity to our people.

We have successfully completed almost 60,000 new connections, through the rural electrification authority.

Further, government has significantly reduced electricity connection fees for households in peri-urban and rural areas.

This reduction is part of the accelerated sustainable and clean energy access transformation initiative.

Madam speaker,

As part of our commitment to delivery, we have tackled the electricity challenge head-on, drastically reducing the hours of load shedding, and in many locations completely ending it.

We want to address our fellow citizens directly. We acknowledge the pain and inconvenience you experienced during those challenging times, and we thank you all for your patience and support throughout.

As a nation, for decades, the energy sector has been neglected, and therefore we as the UPND government are implementing drastic reforms, which will enhance energy security and provide a truly brighter future for the people of Zambia.

These measures include the establishment of solar power stations, the expansion of clean coal-powered electricity generation and the already-successful importation of electricity. Hydro-electricity generation and expansion will continue.

Good governance and integrity

Madam speaker,

The UPND New Dawn administration is committed to promoting good governance and integrity in our nation.

The fight against corruption is central to our work. We are now able to prosecute corruption and economic crimes within **5** months.

This is a huge contrast to what we used to see, where cases could take 20 years or more, in some cases.

Further, our operation 'asset recovery' initiative is yielding results. We have made the largest ever recovery of assets in the history of our nation.

Real estate, vehicles, helicopters, as well as cash, have been recovered. We are returning these assets to the rightful owners, the citizens of Zambia.

We are walking the talk. But we have much more work to do ahead. We will continue to fight past, present and future corruption.

If you are corrupt, you are on your own.

It is immoral to support corrupt activities, and it is immoral to support the people involved.

Madam speaker,

We are determined to ensure that all those entrusted with the management of public affairs and resources act responsibly and operate in the interest of our citizens.

We will continue to address persistent structural, institutional, and capacity challenges to further enhance good governance and integrity.

In short, it must be easier to do honest business and get the support you need from government. There are no short cuts, no easy pickings.

Sustainable development

Madam speaker,

We have positioned our country on a green growth trajectory. In the past four years, we have scaled up climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. We have upgraded all climate monitoring stations and have enhanced national early warning systems.

Through these efforts, we are strengthening resilience in agriculture and other sectors, directly protecting our farmers and their families.

Madam speaker,

Deforestation remains a major challenge in our country. Our administration has, therefore, been promoting natural regeneration and tree planting programmes, as well as the use of alternative sources of energy.

We are also promoting sustainable utilisation and protection of natural resources, such as wildlife, rivers and wetlands.

Furthermore, the number of hectares of forest land placed under community care and management more than doubled, from 4.1 million in 2022 to 10.4 million in 2025.

Madam speaker,

We call upon our traditional leaders and civic leaders, the church, civil society and our communities, to work with government by promoting all efforts aimed at safeguarding our forests.

Madam speaker,

The keep Zambia clean, green and healthy campaign remains key in driving behavioural change and promoting public health.

We urge our citizens and all public and private institutions to prioritise cleaning of the environment so that we can prevent water-borne diseases, such as cholera, before they begin.

We should respect the adage, "prevention is better than a cure"

Madam speaker,

The increased investment in mining has come with its own challenges. It has brought new jobs and opportunities, but we also have seen some negative impact on local communities and the environment.

Our government is strengthening the regulatory framework to promote safe, secure, legal, structured, and sustainable mining practices to avoid the needless loss of life and biodiversity.

We must ensure that the extraction of our natural resources does not become a source of insecurity and instability in our country.

Madam speaker,

Sustainable development occurs when peace and hard work are rewarded by prosperity.

The kwacha has been one of the best performing currencies in the world, inflation is coming down, and other economic fundamentals are getting better, with a clear, positive alignment.

At the same time, we acknowledge that citizens are yet to feel the full benefits, and that the cost of living should be stabilised further.

But with macro-economic stability now firmly in place, the benefits will increasingly be felt by the citizens through a gradual but sustained easing of the cost of living.

As we work to increase wages, we will also work with the private sector to help further drive down the cost of doing business and thereby stabilise prices for the benefit of our people.

We commend the Zambia Association of Manufacturers (ZAM) for responding to the positive economic fundamentals by lowering prices, and we urge others to do the same.

In Conclusion

Madam speaker,

National values and principles are an embodiment of who we are as a people. Our national character and policy choices are firmly anchored on these values and principles.

As such, notwithstanding the tremendous progress we have made, together, we have more work to do.

We all have a duty to turn our national values and principles into action from a place of love and deep care for our people, and the nation's wellbeing.

Madam speaker,

This year, on Thursday 13th August 2026, the country will be holding general elections.

We ask every Zambian to rise to the highest standards of patriotism, integrity and peaceful co-existence before, during and after the elections.

As citizens, we must reject all forms of violence. We must all say no to hate speech. We all must abhor cyber-crimes. We must reject divisive politics. These vices have absolutely no place in our society.

We, therefore, call upon all political actors once again, all candidates, all supporters, the civil society, the church, our traditional leaders, students, youths, the media and all citizens, to demonstrate the highest-level of restraint, respect and responsibility as we head to the polls.

Madam speaker,

We call upon every citizen to contribute towards the realisation of greater national unity and development, as we reiterate our commitment to delivery, and to moving Zambia forward, together.

We call upon every citizen to abide by our guiding principle: **One Zambia, One Nation, One People.**

Madam speaker,

We love our people, we care about our people and therefore we will remain focused on delivery, so that we can improve their well-being.

May the good Lord our God bless us all.

May the good Lord our God bless us with continued peace, security, stability and prosperity.

May the good Lord our God bless our beautiful country, Zambia.

Madam speaker,

We thank you for your kind attention.