

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON THE
CHOLERA OUTBREAK SITUATION IN ZAMBIA
BY
THE MINISTER OF HEALTH (MRS MASEBO), MP

Madam Speaker, may I take this occasion to thank you for according me the opportunity to update this august House and the general public on the Cholera situation in the country.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to recall that on Thursday, 19th October, 2023, during the Matter of Urgent Public Importance Segment, the hon. Madam First Deputy Speaker directed that I issue a ministerial statement on the outbreak of Cholera in the country. The directive followed a matter of urgent public importance raised by Mr Anthony Mumba, hon. Member of Parliament for Kantanshi Parliamentary Constituency.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to note that currently, the Government through the Ministry of Health is responding to outbreaks of cholera in Lusaka and Nsumbu Districts of Zambia. Furthermore, the multi-sectoral response teams are putting in place various measures to avoid further in country spread as well as importation of cholera from neighbouring countries some of which are currently experience outbreaks.

Madam speaker, allow me to remind that august House that the New Dawn Administration through the leadership of His Excellency Mr Hakainde Hichilema, the President of the Republic of Zambia attaches great importance to securing the health of the nation. Zambia has had a number of cholera outbreaks in various parts of the country this year. Firstly, it was in Eastern Province and Vubwi to be specific, Chipata and Chipangali districts. The House may recall that between January and April, 2023, affected a total of 146 people with four deaths.

Secondly, it was in Luapula Province and again early this year, between April of 2023, affected a cumulative of 186 people with five deaths. Thirdly, in Northern Province and Mpulungu District again earlier this year, between February to June, 2023, 341 cases were reported with five deaths. The above outbreaks have since been contained. However, we

continue to conduct advocacy and community sensitization in order to ensure that there is no recurrence of outbreaks.

Madam Speaker, currently, Northern Province is responding to an outbreak in Nsumbu area of Nsama District since August, 2023. However, I am pleased to report that we have made good progress in Nsumbu Area and as of today, 26th of October, 2023, we have gone for seventeen days of zero reporting. This is the second outbreak the district has recorded this year with the total of 176 cases and five cholera related deaths. In February, Nsumbu Areas of Nsama District had also reported seventy-three cholera cases and three deaths.

Madam Speaker, on 18th August, 2023, I issued a press statement and announced that Lusaka District had recorded one case of cholera affecting a twenty-one year of Kanyama Area. It is pleasing to report that the young lady who presented to the health care facility in shock was resuscitated and has since recovered.

Madam Speaker, our health teams are working continuous on the ground to ensure that cases are identified and the community are managed timely. We have continued to conduct contact tracing, community engagement and health education while distributing chlorine for household use and environmental decontamination. As of the 25th of October, 2023, we have observed a few more cholera cases in Lusaka. This situation demands a swift and comprehensive response from both the Government and the public. I would like to provide and update on the current situation and outline the measures that are being taken to combat this outbreak.

Current Situation

Madam Speaker, as regards the number of cases to date, there have been twenty-six confirmed cases do cholera in Lusaka and we are deeply saddened to report that two lives one of which occurred in the community have been lost as a result of this outbreak. Our heartfelt condolences go out to the families affected by this tragedy. Secondly, Madam Speaker, as regards to the spread, cholera is a waterborne disease that can spread rapidly in unsanitary conditions. We have identified specific areas within Lusaka where the outbreak is most concentrated. Our efforts are focused on these high-risk zones.

So far, cases have been identified in Kanyama, Chawama, Meanwood Ndeke, Chipata Compound and Bauleni areas. Students in a boarding house in Chalala where an increase in diarrhoea cases were noted are being investigated. Our teams are also investigating contacts to a student from Evelyn Hone College who tested positive with a rapid diagnostic test.

Regarding the impact on health facilities, Madam Speaker, the surge in Cholera cases has put a significant strain in our health care system. Hospitals and clinics are working tirelessly to provide care to those affected and we are doing our utmost to assure availability of all the required resources or commodities.

Madam Speaker, the Government through a multisectoral response has put in place the following measures.

Heighten Surveillance and Contact Tracing

Madam Speaker, the rapid response teams are on the ground to actively search for cases and trace contacts to the confirmed cases for testing and management.

Public Awareness

Secondly, we have embarked on public awareness campaigns which are being conducted through door to door sensitization and media programmes to educate our citizens on the importance of maintaining good hygiene using safe water sources and practicing proper food handling and preparation. Household chlorine is being distributed to members of the affected communities.

I want to pose Madam Speaker, through you to ask the communities to begin to learn to buy chlorine. We have people who buy beer, but they say that they do not have money to buy chlorine. The Government will continue to distribute, but it is about time people take responsibility. The issues of hygiene are personal.

Sanitation Measures

Madam Speaker, we have intensified sanitation efforts in the affected areas, including the regular cleaning of public places, correct disposal of waste and ensuring access to clean drinking water. We will continue to ask the community to ensure that water that they drink must be safe, either by chlorinating or boiling it if they do not have the chlorinators.

Medical Services

Madam Speaker, we are increasing the availability of medical services and supplies in the affected areas. This includes the establishment of cholera treatment centres to manage and treat affected individuals even in areas not yet affected by the outbreak. We are taking a proactive stance as regards to treatment.

Collaboration

Madam Speaker, we are working with the local authorities, non-Governmental organisation and international partners to enhance our response efforts.

Provincial and District Epidemic Preparedness Management Committees

Madam Speaker, the provincial and district epidemic preparedness prevention control and management committees and the respective emergency operations centres across the country have been activated to enhance better coordination for the preparedness and response to any potential cholera outbreak.

Madam Speaker, you will recall that this preparedness is at the highest level Chaired by none other than Her Honour the Vice-President, when the need becomes urgent. For now, we have activated all the district preparedness and prevention committees and the provincial and ministerial and of course the national one under Her Honour the Vice-President is forever ready.

Capacity building

Madam Speaker, in cholera preparedness and response for our entire frontline health worker in all the districts in the country are being activated. Our teams on the ground are well prepared to detect, confirm and respond to any suspected cases of cholera in a timely and efficient manner. You will note that we are not panicking this time because our teams throughout the country now are learning to get prepared for these epidemics. I would like to thank the office of the Vice-President and the able efficient organisation the Zambia national public health institution that has become mature in this work of preparedness.

Madam Speaker, the risk factors in our country remain the same of what is causing cholera:

- (a) consumption of contaminated water;
- (b) consumption of contaminated food;
- (c) inadequate water and sanitation facilities;
- (d) poor solid waste management; and
- (e) poor personal hygiene.

Madam Speaker, these are the causes of cholera. To do with hygiene and what we consume. It is for this reason that we are discouraging people from foods on the street, especially now with the onset of rains, let us take issues of health personal.

May I reiterate Madam Speaker, that the supply of clean and safely managed water, as well as adequate sanitation facilities remains the key in prevention of cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases if we are to achieve our long-term goals of cholera elimination by 2025? In this regard, I wish to call upon colleagues under the various ministries such as the Ministry of Education, especially the Ministry Local Government and Rural Development and the councils to help us in this regard.

Madam Speaker, as I conclude, allow me to remind hon. Members of this august House and through them the people in their constituencies that cholera can be prevented. Let us ensure to employ the following measures:

Boiling or Chlorinating Water

We urge also our citizens to boil water before drinking it or cooking with it to ensure that it is safe. Alternatively, persons can add chlorine to their drinking water;

Hand Hygiene

Frequent hand washing with soap and water before and after eating as well as after using a toilet is essential in preventing cholera.

Food Security

Proper food handling and preparation are critical to prevent contamination. We urge everyone to avoid buying and eating food from the streets. Leftover food must be well covered and reheated at times of eating.

Avoid Large Gatherings

Avoid large gathering including funerals in high risk areas. The burial of all people who die from cholera should be managed by the state through the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

Madam Speaker, the Government led by the global cholera ambassador none other than His Excellency the President, Mr Hakainde Hichilema remains fully committed to containing and ultimately eliminating this cholera outbreak, we understand the grave impact it has had on the lives and well-being of our citizens sand we are doing everything within our power to address the situation.

Madam Speaker, my clarion call goes to all people in Zambia to take person responsibility in maintaining good hygiene and adhering to the preventive measures we have outlined. The Government with the support of our citizen will work tirelessly to overcome this crisis and ensure that health and safety of our people.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.
