

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **ROLES AND OPERATIONS OF THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION UNIT**

#### **The Minister in the Office of the Vice-President (Ms Chalikosa)**

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to give a Ministerial Statement on the roles and operations of the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU), one of the departments in the Office of the Vice-President.

Madam Speaker, allow me to begin by giving a short background to disaster management in the country. The DMMU was formed by a Cabinet decision in 1994 and started operations in 1997. This followed lessons learnt from the response to the 1991 severe drought. The response to this severe natural calamity was uncoordinated and the Government, at the time, felt there was need to establish a unit to coordinate and mobilise resources relating to disaster management.

Madam Speaker, the unit replaced the Contingency Planning Unit in the Office of the the then Prime Minister. With the global paradigm shift from disaster management to disaster risk reduction and the advent of climate change, the unit has evolved accordingly to meet its mandate of coordination and resource mobilisation for prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response.

Madam Speaker, in 2005, the Government developed the National Disaster Management Policy and Operations Manual to strengthen the operations of the DMMU and to define the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders at all levels before, during and after the hazard incident. This was in line with the global trend of institutionalising disaster management activities according to the Hyogo Framework of Action 2005 to 2015.

Madam Speaker, in 2010, this House enacted the Disaster Management Act No. 13 to give the unit a legal basis for its operations and existence. In 2015, the Policy and Operations Manual was

revised to take on board new contemporary issues, including climate change. Members who may wish to access the Disaster Management Act, the revised policy and manual can contact DMMU.

Madam Speaker, I would like to address the roles and operations of the unit. DMMU is charged with the responsibility of coordinating responses to disasters, humanitarian situations, resilience building and risk reduction. It is important to note that it is not an ordinary department but a unique unit. The unit has three sections which are; operations, logistics and management, research and planning and information management systems. It also has its presence in all the ten provincial headquarters.

Madam Speaker, the mandate of the DMMU is to coordinate all disaster management activities beyond the capacity of a sector to deal with in the country and in line with the provision of the Disaster Management Act No. 13 of 2010. Its mission is to effectively and efficiently manage disasters in order to minimise loss of life, damage to property and environment through the harmonisation of national efforts.

Madam Speaker, the functions of the DMMU, as stipulated in the Disaster Management Act are as follows:

- (a) acts as the central planning coordinating and monitoring institution for prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and post disaster recovery taking into account all potential disaster risks;
- (b) advises the technical committee on the progress and constraints in disaster management and other matters relating to the management of disaster relief operations, warn the public of an eminent disaster and predict its effects;
- (c) maintains a data collection and dissemination system, and national strategic reserves of essential commodities and equipment for immediate disaster relief;

- (d) formulates disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and rehabilitation strategies and action plans to meet all foreseeable requirements in consultation with the Government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and donor agencies;
- (e) prepares and updates the Disaster Management plans and the supporting Disaster Management Manual;
- (f) prepares an overarching National Disaster Contingency Plan and coordinates cross-sectoral plans;
- (g) establishes an early warning system covering all sectors and hazard sources and maintain close links with the different institutions that provide early warning services.
- (h) develops and sustains viable, effective structures and capacities at the national and provincial levels as well as within the districts;
- (i) takes all necessary measures in order to prevent, alleviate, contain and minimise the effects of disasters;
- (j) conducts public and media briefings on disaster related programmes, progress and constraints;
- (k) acts as an advisory and consultative body on issues concerning disasters and disaster management;
- (l) makes post-disaster reconstruction, rehabilitation and recovery plans;
- (m) promotes the recruitment, training and participation of volunteers in disaster management;

- (n) establishes and manages an emergency operation centre, which shall be the nerve centre to monitor emergencies and feed into the normal operations of the unit;
- (o) acts as a central clearing house for the reporting of disasters and dissemination of output from the technical committee during a disaster;
- (p) conducts assessments before, during and after disasters;
- (q) works with authorities in other countries that are responsible for disaster management to exchange information and have access to international expertise and assistance in respect of disaster management; and
- (r) carries out and coordinates all research relevant to its functions for the purpose of advising the council and the technical committee on measures necessary for disaster prevention and preparedness.

Madam Speaker, looking at the above functions, hon. Members will note that these are cross-cutting issues with sector specific ministries and departments which should take the lead during the developmental phase. It is important that these sectors play their roles in line with their mandate. DMMU only comes in if the hazard event is beyond the capacity of the particular sector to cope.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.