

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH, MR MUCHIMA, ON
THE GOVERNMENT'S PREPAREDNESS TO PREVENT AN OUTBREAK OF CHOLERA
ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Madam Speaker, I wish to thank you for giving me this opportunity to update this august House on an important matter of public health importance, which is the Government's preparedness to stop and prevent the spread of cholera across the country. I would also like to reaffirm the Government's unwavering commitment to protecting the health of all Zambians by ensuring that adequate measures are put in place to avoid further spread of the disease and its resultant illness and possible deaths.

Madam Speaker, as you directed, we have to respond accordingly. The Northern Province was the epicentre of the initial outbreak, which was first detected on 5th August, 2025. Through a robust and targeted response, including a vaccination campaign, the Government achieved over 99 per cent coverage in the most affected areas, thereby successfully containing the disease. This is a testament to the effectiveness of our public health measures and the co-operation of the community.

Madam Speaker, this august House may wish to note that the country is also experiencing a localised outbreak in Monze District of the Southern Province, which has, to date, recorded thirty-five cases in total. The situation in Monze is under control, and I would like to assure the honourable House that a dedicated team is on the ground, actively working to contain this cluster and prevent further transmissions.

Madam Speaker, since the start of the outbreak, we have recorded a total number of 569 cases, with four patients currently under admission, that is, two in Monze and two in Mpulungu. I am proud to report that our dedicated health teams have successfully treated and discharged 556 individuals, and as of yesterday morning, only one patient remained in care across the entire country. Regrettably, we have recorded a total of nine deaths since the outbreak began. I, therefore, would like to extend my deepest condolences to the bereaved families through this august House for losing their beloved ones to cholera. The loss of our loved ones is the reason for strengthening

our efforts and commitment to ensuring that adequate measures are put in place to prevent further outbreaks of disease and protect the public from further infections and prevent further losses.

Madam Speaker, the focus of our efforts to prevent further spread of the disease is a targeted vaccination campaign, an intervention that has been crucial in limiting the scale and spread of this outbreak within and across communities and locations. To date, a total of 225,858 people have been vaccinated in hotspot districts. I further wish to inform the nation through this august House that vaccinations are in short supply globally. However, to manage and contain the situation, the Government, through the Ministry of Health, has requested 156,000 doses of cholera vaccines through the World Health Organisation (WHO) mechanism. I would like to stress, therefore, that the shortage of such essential drugs is a call for the country to work towards local manufacturing of commodities, including cholera vaccines. To this effect, the Government, through the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), is working towards signing an agreement for setting up a local manufacturing plant, with the purpose of improving access to quality and effective drugs and vaccines by the people of Zambia. This will be done in a modular approach, starting with what we call fill and finish, to be followed by end-to-end manufacturing over a three to four-year period.

Madam Speaker, community participation is more crucial now than ever. I implore all citizens, especially in the Northern and Southern provinces, to pay particular attention to adhere to the following life-saving measures:

- (a) drinking safe water that has been boiled or properly treated with chlorine;
- (b) practicing good hygiene by washing hands with soap and clean water frequently, particularly after using the toilet and before handling food;
- (c) eating safe food by ensuring that all food is cooked thoroughly, eating it while it is still hot, and avoiding raw foods whenever possible; and

- (d) seeking early treatment. If you or anyone in your family experiences symptoms like severe watery diarrhoea and vomiting, please, seek immediate medical help at the nearest health facility.

Madam Speaker, our national strategy is robust and multi-sectoral, guided by the 2025 National Cholera Contingency Plan. The National Public Health Emergency Operations Centre, managed by the Zambia National Public Health Institute (ZNPFI), co-ordinates a unified and data-driven response across all Government levels, ensuring that we are prepared to act decisively.

Madam Speaker, in terms of national preparedness, we have the following:

Proactive Surveillance and Early Warning System

Madam Speaker, our integrated disease surveillance and response system actively monitors high-risk districts daily. This surveillance system is further supported by a network of community-based health workers, who act as our eyes and ears on the ground, ensuring that any potential threat is detected and reported early for swift and decisive response.

Clinical and Logistical Readiness

Madam Speaker, the Government has procured essential medical supplies, which include test kits, treatments and oral rehydration salts in all hotspot areas. This is further supported by real-time monitoring of the supply chain system to ensure constant availability of essential commodities and stocks.

Training Healthcare Professionals on the Latest Cholera Case Management Protocols

Madam Speaker, training has been done to ensure adequate and advanced skills in case management.

Empowering Communities

Madam Speaker, through our risk communication and community engagement strategy, the Government is delivering vital health information directly to the people through various platforms, sharing clear, actionable guidelines on hygiene, safe water and the importance of seeking immediate medical care at the first sign of symptoms.

Strengthened Partnership and Cooperation with Partners

Madam Speaker, the Government has been accelerating the installation of new water points. We are testing boreholes and decommissioning unsafe wells while ensuring that public water is consistently chlorinated. Furthermore, efforts have been strengthened towards enforcing public health laws related to food, safety and waste management to prevent possible outbreaks.

Madam Speaker, cholera is a multi-faceted challenge, and it calls for a multi-sectoral response in the fight against the disease. While emphasising the crucial role played by the Ministry of Water Development and Sanitation, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, and the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU), I would like to further call upon all stakeholders to heighten their efforts to stop the spread of the disease.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to reassure the nation of the Government's commitment to ensuring the health of citizens, which will contribute to the overall socioeconomic development of the country. I wish to state that our system for detecting and treating cases is built on speed and effectiveness, presenting a clear and efficient pathway to ensure our citizens affected by cholera receive prompt, high-quality care to prevent further transmission and possible death.

I would further wish to express my profound gratitude to our health care workers, our partners and the resilient people of Zambia for the vigilance and efforts to contain the disease so far. I am confident that with the multi-layered strategy, proactive surveillance, combined with technical readiness, clinical and logistical readiness, strengthened partnership and community involvement, ensures our nation remains resilient against further cholera outbreaks.

I thank you, Madam Speaker

