

FRIDAY, 2 NOVEMBER, 2018

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

2018/2019 RAINY SEASON FORECAST

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION, MR MUSHIMBA

Mr Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity you have granted me to give this ministerial statement on the 2018/2019 rainfall forecast. I felt it judicious to update the nation through this august House on the upcoming rainy season that may give rise to positive and negative impacts on the livelihoods of many across the country.

Mr Speaker, weather and climate information supports informed decision making and planning across all socio-economic spheres and contributes to national development. Climate information is cardinal to support our aspirations to enhance economic diversification and job creation, poverty and vulnerability reduction. It is also important for creating resilience and adapting to climate variability and climate change that we are experiencing as a global.

The adverse impact of climate variability and climate change are obvious as manifested in the 2017/2018 rainy season where many parts of the country experienced extreme weather conditions ranging from prolonged dry spells in December and January to flooding in February and March. The dry conditions damaged crops and reduced crop production while the floods caused damage to infrastructure such as roads and bridges.

In addition, Mr Speaker, during the 2017/2018 rainy season, crop production was also threatened by outbreaks of army worms which ravished maize fields countrywide. These pest outbreaks, including their development and movement, are directly controlled by weather and climate conditions. Therefore, weather and climate information is vital for the mitigation and fight against agricultural pest pandemics.

Mr Speaker, the 2018/2019 rainfall forecast generally indicates that much of Zambia is likely to receive normal to below normal rainfall during the 2018/2019 rainy season. The rainy season

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is likely to start by late November, 2018 over most parts of the country and may be characterised by intervals of dry spells. However, the northern parts of Zambia are likely to start experiencing thunderstorms and showers this month. There is high chance that most of the rainfall will be received in December, January and February countrywide. There is also a likelihood of below normal rainfall in March, 2019 indicating an early ending of the 2018/2019 rainy season, especially over the southern half of the country.

Mr Speaker, allow me to emphasise that as has been witnessed in the past, in some seasons, rainfall begins earlier than expected and in every season dry spells occur which in certain circumstances lead to crop loss. In this regard, I wish to urge our farmers and other stakeholders to regularly get in touch with my ministry and Ministry of Agriculture to access meteorological forecasts and updates that are made available.

Mr Speaker, the 2018/2019 rainfall season forecast will be categorised into four periods of three months each. The first period is from the months of October, November and December, 2018. During this period, there is a high likelihood of recording normal to below normal rainfall over much of Zambia except for the north-eastern part of the country which is likely to receive normal to above normal rainfall during this period.

For the period November, December and January, the following areas are likely to receive normal to above normal rainfall: Luapula; Copperbelt; the northern parts of the North-Western, Central, Northern; and the southern parts of Muchinga and Eastern Provinces. On the other hand, most of the Southern, Western, Lusaka and northern half of Muchinga and Eastern Provinces are likely to receive normal to below normal rainfall during this period.

Mr Speaker, as we progress into December, January and February, there is a likelihood of the northern half of the country receiving normal to above normal rainfall while the southern half is likely to record normal rainfall during this period. In the last three months of the season, January, February and March, most of the southern half of the country is likely to receive normal to below normal rainfall. In contrast, the extreme northern parts of the country are likely to record normal to above normal rainfall.

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Mr Speaker, every season is characterised by wide ranging implications on the socio-economic sectors. In this respect, I wish to inform the nation that during the 2018/2019 Rainy Season, we may experience dry spells, insufficient water for domestic consumption and agriculture and energy production, among others. There may also be floods and flash floods, especially in prone areas, infrastructure damage especially to civil structures such as roads, bridges and culverts, increased chance of disease outbreaks such as cholera, dysentery and typhoid and the occurrence of agricultural pests across the country.

Sir, that said, let me take this opportunity to advise the general public to take all the necessary precautions to avoid loss of life and property until the end of the Rainy Season. I particularly want to emphasise the need for all sectors to vehemently conduct sensitisation programmes regarding good sanitation and hygiene practices and clearing of drainages well in advance to avoid water pulls and increase of diseases such as cholera, as we saw in the previous Rainy Season. Furthermore, there is a great need for institutions to stockpile relief materials, medicines and pesticides that may be required during the Rainy Season.

Mr Speaker, as I conclude, let me inform the nation that my ministry will continue giving the nation updates on the actual and expected rainfall during the entire Rainy Season through community radio stations, the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) on both radio and television, including electronic platforms such as e-mails and websites. I further urge our farmers countrywide to seek further guidance from the Ministry of Agriculture on when to plant, what to plant and the general aspects of crop management. My ministry will be working hand in hand with colleagues from the Ministry of Agriculture and other key stakeholders to co-produce timely climate information during the Rainy Season.

Mr Speaker, we have also placed detailed weather forecast reports in the pigeon holes for the hon. Members of this House to refer to as they engage their communities on this season's forecast.

I thank you, Sir.