

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON
**THE STATUS OF ESSENTIAL MEDICINES AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES
COUNTRYWIDE**
BY
**THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND ACTING LEADER OF GOVERNMENT
BUSINESS IN THE HOUSE (MR LUFUMA) (ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTER OF
HEALTH (MRS MASEBO), MP**

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to deliver the ministerial statement for and on behalf of the hon. Minister of Health.

Madam Speaker, I wish to thank you most sincerely for the opportunity to render a ministerial statement, to update this august House and the general public on the status of essential medicines and medical supplies in the public health facilities countrywide. Additionally, I will update the House on measures that the Government has put in place, to improve the supply chain management systems to ensure availability of essential medicines and medical supplies in all public health facilities across the country.

Madam Speaker, we are all aware that Zambia is facing a double burden of disease with a high prevalence of communicable diseases and a rising incidence of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). The Government is mandated not only to treat diseases but also focus on promoting wellness and prevention of diseases. Availability of medicines and medical supplies is one of the important health pillars that support the well-being of the population.

Madam Speaker, in light of the foregoing, the Government is committed to the provision of equity of access for all Zambians to good quality, safe and efficacious medicines and medical supplies which are affordable, rationally used and as close to the family as possible in line with our National Drug Policy.

Madam Speaker, from August 2021, we noted with great concern, the low levels of essential medicines and medical supplies countrywide that ranged from 40 to 60 per cent availability. This was way below the recommended target by the World Health Organisation (WHO) of 70 to 80 per cent availability at all levels of healthcare.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to note that in 2022, the availability of medicines still ranged between 50 to 60 per cent mainly due to the following reasons:

- (a) the procurement function of medicines and medical supplies that was being transferred from the Ministry of Health to the Zambia Medicines and Medical Supplies Agency (ZAMMSA) in line with the Zambia Medicines and Medical Supplies Agency Act No. 9 of 2019;
- (b) the end of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic which had severely disrupted the supply chain not only for Zambia but world over; and
- (c) the drug debt of over K2.2 billion which was inherited and resulted in most suppliers not wanting to supply medicines and medical supplies to the Government.

Madam Speaker, despite these challenges, the Government increased funding for medicines and medical supplies from K1.2 billion in 2021 to a whopping K3.6 billion in 2022 and K4.6 billion in 2023.

Madam Speaker, I am glad to inform the House that this Government has managed to dismantle most of this debt. Additionally, the House may wish to note that the ZAMMSA Board and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) were appointed in 2022. The Government adopted a hybrid supply chain system, which includes on one side health centre kits and the other side the bulk supply system of essential medicines and medical supplies. These measures have ensured the restoration of the supply chain and have contributed to the improved percentage availability of essential medicines and medical supplies in the public health facilities countrywide.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to note that as of July 2023, the first 7,000 out of 42,000 health centre kits arrived in the country that significantly improved the availability of primary healthcare medicines and medical supplies from 50 per cent to now over 80 per cent availability in our health posts and health centres. The second batch of 7,000 of health centre

kits arrived at ZAMMSA and will be distributed to all our health posts and health centres to maintain availability of over 80 per cent. Note that the remaining health centre kits will be arriving every two months up to June 2024.

Madam Speaker, the House may wish to note that the delivery of bulk medicines and medical supplies started arriving at ZAMMSA in September 2023 and will continue to be delivered through December 2023 and the first quarter of 2024. These supplies will cover first, second, third and fourth level hospital medicines and medical supplies requirements. As of 14th October, 2023, the national stock position improved to an average of 85 per cent at health centres and 75 per cent at hospitals.

Madam Speaker, it is expected that once the essential medicines and medical supplies recently received at ZAMMSA are distributed (7,000 health centre kits and the assorted bulk procurement of essential medicines), they will significantly increase and stabilise the national availability of medicines at all levels of care to above 80 per cent.

Madam Speaker, I am delighted to inform the House and the Zambia people that the New Dawn Administration under the able leadership of His Excellency, Mr Hakainde Hichilema, the President of the Republic of Zambia, has put in place measures that have improved medicine supply management systems and ensure steady availability and access of essential medicines and medical supplies such as:

- (a) the Government has increased further the allocation to the drug budget from K3.9 billion in 2023 to K4.9 billion in 2024;
- (b) procurement of 42,000 health centre kits from Mission Pharma in India to cover up to June 2024, and ZAMMSA has initiated procurement of 57,000 health centre kits to cover from June 2024 to 2026. Of the 57, 000 health centre kits, 10, 000 will be from local pharmaceutical manufacturers;
- (c) ZAMMSA will continue procuring medicines and medical supplies using government to government initiatives and through the multilateral partners such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA);

- (d) ZAMMSA has continued to engage local suppliers and pharmaceutical manufacturers for bulk essential medicines and medical supplies in 2023, and will continue to engage with local suppliers in order for them to contribute to the stabilisation of the supply chain;
- (e) in May 2023, Statutory Instrument No. 14 of 2023 was issued to operationalise the Medicines and Medical Supplies Fund that will receive funding from the Government, co-operating partners, the National Health Insurance Scheme Authority (NHIMA), the commercial wing of ZAMMSA, and other sources of funding. The purpose of the Fund, as prescribed in the Act, is to among others:
 - (i) ensure availability of medicines and medical supplies in public health facilities; and
 - (ii) procure and distribute medicines and medical supplies for emergency purposes for public health facilities.
- (f) promoting local manufacturing of medicines, vaccines and medical supplies in order to assure a consistent and resilient supply of quality medicines and medical supplies in the country; and
- (g) continued strengthening of the task force against pilferage of medicines and medical supplies in all public health facilities.

Madam Speaker, as I conclude, these measures that the Government has put in place are expected to restore our in-country supply chain and commodity security, thereby restoring confidence for both health workers and patients in our health systems and services.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.

