

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON

PREVAILING HUNGER SITUATION COUNTRYWIDE

BY

THE HON. MINISTER IN THE OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, MRS MWANSA, MP

Mr Speaker, thank you for according me this opportunity to render a ministerial statement on the prevailing hunger situation in the country.

Sir, the drought conditions that the country experienced during the 2018/2019 rainy season is a regional problem that has affected as many as seven countries including Zambia. The drought has mainly affected the Southern half with part of Central, Eastern and Lusaka Provinces. The drought conditions were influenced by a weak state of the El Nino–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) which had resulted in below average rainfall in Southern parts of Zambia. In a twist of fate, my office also had to contend with floods in the northern half of the country.

Mr Speaker, the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) conducted the 2019 In-Depth Vulnerability and Needs Assessment with the purpose of understanding the impact that the drought and floods had on selected sectors of the economy. I would like to inform the House that a total 2,330,182 people representing 388,364 households in fifty-eight districts will require relief interventions for them to survive up to the next harvest. These households will require 164,775 metric tonnes of cereal and 49,433 metric tonnes of pulses.

Mr Speaker, the House may also wish to know that we have included pulses such as beans to ensure food and nutrition security at household level.

Sir, my office has distributed a total of 2,033,920 by 12.5 kg of mealie meal in fifty-eight districts which were assessed by the Zambia Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZVAC) and an additional thirteen districts which were not captured in the assessment. This is an on-going process that will go on up to the next harvest period.

Mr Speaker, we are discussing with line ministries and the co-operating partners for us to also ensure that selected households of mainly elderly, child headed households and the terminally ill also receive some emergency cash transfer so that the support goes beyond food. We are also working on modalities of an emergency school feeding programmes with the Ministry of General Education and the World Food Programme (WFP) to ensure that we keep the learners in schools for communities that were badly hit by drought and floods.

Mr Speaker, the House may further wish to note that the country also experienced emergency hazards such as hail and windstorms which damaged various types of critical infrastructure such as schools, clinics, and houses in most parts of the country. This year, a total of 678 schools had their roofs blown off with the Eastern and the Western provinces having the largest numbers. The Office of the Vice-President has put in place interventions in other sectors such as health, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, infrastructure, education, social and livelihoods protection.

Mr Speaker, the national coordinator for the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) and I have been to many of these districts and have seen that the needs of our people are indeed great. However, the office of the Vice-President is equal to the task. I would like to say to all the hon. Members of Parliament that the doors to our offices are open and that we would like to work with everybody to ensure that the desired relief food reaches all the deserving households.

Sir, may I restate my invitation to hon. Members of Parliament to feel free to engage the national coordinator when they have issues that they feel have not been adequately addressed in their constituencies, considering that the hon. Members of Parliament are members of the District Disaster Management Committees (DDMC).

Mr Speaker, the House may wish to note that relief food distribution by the DMMU is not meant to replace people's coping capacities, it is purely meant to supplement local abilities of sustenance, strengthening their resilience, and reducing vulnerability. The DMMU is guided by four pillars, namely; humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence in the execution of humanitarian programmes, and the current distribution of relief food is not exceptional.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.