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**PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION URGING GOVERNMENT TO STRENGTHEN  
MEASURES TO MINIMISE CHARCOAL BURNING COUNTRY WIDE IN VIEW OF  
THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

**BY**

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**Mr. Speaker,**

Let me begin by expressing my profound appreciation to you for allowing me to move this Private Members' Motion that "in view of the adverse effects of climate change, this House urges the Government to strengthen measures to minimise charcoal burning country wide.

**Mr Speaker,**

At the outset, I wish to state that I was compelled to move this Motion in solidarity with His Excellency the President, Dr Edgar Chagwa Lungu's call for all of us to take action to address the adverse effects of climate change, which our country is grappling with. Let me also state that this Motion is not intended at persuading Government to ban charcoal burning in Zambia. In any case, the gist of my Motion is to urge Government to be sensitive in addressing the issue of charcoal burning as it is double-edged as I will demonstrate shortly.

**Mr Speaker,**

It goes without saying that charcoal makes up a large share of the energy budget among many households in Zambia. According to a 2016 report by the Indaba Agricultural Policy Research Institute (IAPRI), charcoal and firewood are the main cooking energy sources for over 90 percent of the households in Zambia. The report further indicates that the demand for charcoal in Zambia mainly concerns urban centres, with 85 percent of urban populations heavily dependent on charcoal for domestic use. This increasingly high demand for charcoal has steadily pushed up charcoal production and supply. In addition, there is enough evidence indicating that current load-shedding that the country has been experiencing since 2015 has contributed to the following:

- (i) commercialisation of charcoal production to meet the market demand;
- (ii) soaring consumer prices for charcoal;
- (iii) unsustainable forest resource utilisation due to increased tree felling and localised deforestation and forest degradation; and
- (iv) loss of forest ecosystems functions and associated ecosystem goods and services.

**Mr Speaker,**

Because of this, Zambia's deforestation rate has alarmingly become high. According to recent data by the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Zambia's deforestation rate currently ranges between 250 to 300 thousand hectares of land per year. Further, environmental experts have warned that Zambia's forests risk becoming deserts in the next fifteen years going by the current rate of deforestation. Mr Speaker, the big question is: why are people engaging in charcoal burning and cutting trees indiscriminately? I would argue that there are several reasons.

**Mr Speaker,**

Clearing of land for farming is one factor, but logging for timber and cutting trees for firewood and charcoal production rank top on the causes. A quick analysis reveals that charcoal burning is a lucrative business venture and a major source of livelihood for many people in Zambia. According to a 2017 report by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the charcoal industry in Zambia is worth five billion Kwacha or 2.3 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and has been estimated to provide full-time employment for about 41 000 people in rural areas. Surely, the ground is fertile for a thriving charcoal business. After all, for many rural households, earning a living from farming and selling firewood and charcoal

is essential to survival. This compounded by erratic power supply through load shedding, forces even the most affluent communities to resort to charcoal as a source of energy.

**Mr Speaker,**

Allow me to further demonstrate why people engage in the charcoal business in our country. On 6<sup>th</sup> February, 2020, the Daily Mail carried a story of a young man from Matero who has engaged in the charcoal business to sustain his life and that of his family. Allow me to quote from the newspaper and I will lay it on the Table: “ Zebron Phiri cycles to Ngo’mbe market from Matero Township every day of the week to sell charcoal. He does this to help his parents pay tuition fees for his older and younger siblings who are in university, college and primary school. At age 19, Zebron has taken up a huge burden upon his shoulders to supplement his parents’ effort to educate his siblings. He says every three months, he pays K1,500 for his brother, who is on 75 percent bursary, then his parents pay the rest. Zebron says selling charcoal has now become part of his life, because he has been doing the business from the time he was 14.” End of quote.

**Mr Speaker,**

Sentiments like these represent the realities surrounding the issue of charcoal burning across our country. However, it is clear that protecting forests and the environment on one hand and facilitating better livelihood for all on the other, represents a serious dilemma for us as leaders. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we cannot do anything about this situation. We need to take action now, otherwise, our country risks experiencing worse effects of climate change than the ones we are currently experiencing.

**Mr Speaker,**

The following are some of the some of the measures we ought to undertake to minimise the devastating effects of charcoal burning;

- i. strengthen the legal and policy framework on forestry management and ensure strict enforcement and effective implementation;
- ii. provide for mandatory restoration of areas in which charcoal was formerly produced;
- iii. conduct training and sensitisation on the rules, policies and legislation pertaining forest management, as well as the long term value of forests;
- iv. enforce the requirement for traders to carry production and conveyance licences;
- v. address the high levels of poverty and unemployment which are the underlying causes of charcoal burning;
- vi. provide alternatives for charcoal use and production.

**Mr Speaker,**

Allow me now to briefly elaborate on some of the measures outlined above. Sir, the need to strengthen the legal and policy framework on forest management cannot be overemphasised. I am aware that the Government, through the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources has put in place a number of legal and policy measures aimed at minimising the adverse effects of combating charcoal burning. These include the National Strategy to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation of 2017; the National Climate Change Policy of 2016, the Forest Policy of 2014 and the Forest Act No. 4 of 2015. These policy documents have stipulated measures and guidelines to govern the management and utilisation of forestry resources in Zambia. This is commendable.

However, the Government must ensure that the measures contained in these policy documents are effectively implemented and, where necessary strictly enforced. For example, community forestry bodies created under the Forest Act No. 4 of 2015, to facilitate community engagement and devolution of powers to the local level in forest management, should be set up and fully operationalised across the country. These include Community Forestry Management (CFM), Joint Forest Management (JFM), the Participatory Forest Management (PFM) and Private Forest Management (PvFM).

**Mr Speaker,**

I am also aware that the Government has set aside charcoal production areas in some districts. However, Government should ensure that the Forest Act requirement for charcoal producers to extinguish kilns after production is strictly enforced. Furthermore, the Government should provide for mandatory restoration of areas in which charcoal was formerly produced. To effectively implement this, I urge the Government to deploy more forest officers to conduct inspections on charcoal production sites. Similarly, the Government should enforce or make it a requirement for traders to carry production and conveyance licences, receipts and national registration cards with the name of the person indicated on the licence, whenever trading in charcoal. Similarly, the Forestry Department (FD) under the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources has the mandate for managing the forest sector in Zambia. Yet, the Department has limited resources to enforce its mandate fully, including monitoring forest resources especially charcoal production. This should be addressed.

**Mr Speaker,**

I am also of the view that charcoal producers should be sensitised and trained in order to enhance levels of self-compliance with rules, policies and legislation pertaining to forest management. Most importantly, there is need for adequate training and sensitisation of charcoal producers regarding the long term value of forests. For example, charcoal producers must appreciate that forests provide essential ecosystem services, such as timber; food; fuel; fodder; non-wood products and shelter; soil and water conservation; and clean air. In addition, forests prevent land degradation; desertification and reduce the risk of floods, landslides and avalanches, droughts, and sand storms and other disasters. Forests are also home to an estimated 80% of all terrestrial species. Forests contribute substantially to climate change mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity conservation. This lack of knowledge about the value of trees is evident even in the way some charcoal burners uproot the trees instead of cutting from the stems to allow them to grow again.

Equally, communities living near forest areas should work with chiefs and district councils to develop local rules and guidelines for managing forests, through which timber can be made available to charcoal producers at a fee. Traditional rules would be a good foundation for forest management. Municipalities, district councils and other local government authorities should also be encouraged to work with charcoal consumers in areas under their jurisdiction so they can adopt the use of energy-saving stoves and other conservation measures and technologies.

**Mr Speaker,**

I will failing in my duties if I do not spell out some of the alternatives to charcoal burning that our people can engage in to minimise the devastating effects of charcoal burning. There were a number of alternatives to charcoal burning that could be promoted to meet household and commercial energy needs. These include:

1. The use of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) stoves and briquettes. To effectively promote this, Government can zero rate tax on all LPG stoves and related equipment to enable low-income families to purchase and move away from charcoal use.
2. The use of solid bamboo as an alternative source for charcoal production. Sir, solid bamboo grows fast and could be harvested continuously without replanting for about 3 to 4 years. It can grow well in degraded and marginal soils and its charcoal closely mirrors the hardwood charcoal found on the market today.

**Mr Speaker,**

Allow me to end by adding that charcoal burning and deforestation are just, but symptoms of a bigger problem, emanating from high poverty and unemployment levels. Government must, therefore ensure that challenges related to poverty and unemployment are addressed through increased job creation and economic diversification. This will help to create the much needed incentives to minimise charcoal burning and sustainably lead to improved livelihoods. This issue links well with the need for government find alternative ways



If we sustainably manage our forests and trees, through the measures I have highlighted above, we will be contributing to the country's realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially SDG 15, which seeks to “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.”

**Mr Speaker,**

This is a non controversial Motion. I, therefore, sincerely request all Honourable Members to rise to the occasion and support it, as well as complement efforts to address climate change.

**Mr. Speaker, I beg to move.**