

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

FORECAST FOR 2019/2020 RAINY SEASON

The Minister of Communication and Transport (Mr Kafwaya): Mr Speaker, I want to thank you sincerely for granting me this opportunity to render a ministerial statement on the 2019/2020 rainy season forecast. I thought it will be appropriate to update the nation through this august House on the current rainy season, which is likely going to give rises both to positive and negative impacts on the livelihoods of our people across the country. This statement is in addition to the press statement which I issued on 4th September, 2019.

Sir, the potential for weather information to contribute to social and economic development cannot be overemphasised. As such, this information must be shared so that it is integrated in our planning and decision management in all sectors of our human endeavour. In line with the Seventh National Development Plan (7thNDP), weather and climate information is critical in delivery of aspiration to enhance economic diversification, job creation, poverty and vulnerability reduction as well as reducing developmental inequalities, while at the same time preserving our environment. The use of weather climate information is also cardinal for adapting and building resilience of our economy and communities to climate variability and climate change.

Furthermore, weather and climate information is important in disaster risk reduction and preparedness in extreme weather and climate events such as floods and droughts, which have become more prevalent in recent years. Weather and climate information is equally vital for mitigating and fighting diseases against humans, animals and plants.

Mr Speaker, we are aware that small scale farmers and rural dwellers are the most vulnerable people in our society, who are negatively affected by the weather and lack of information on weather and climate. I, therefore, urge my hon. Colleagues in the House to take this message to our people in the constituencies in order for the people to benefit from it.

Sir, the country experienced, in the past two rainy seasons of 2017/2018 and 2018/2019, adverse impacts of weather variability and climate change. For example, in the 2017/2018 rainy season, we witnessed extreme weather conditions ranging from prolonged dry spells in January to flooding in February and March. Furthermore the immediate past 2018/2019 season had most areas in the southern half of the country receiving below average rainfall. Choma, Gwembe and surrounding areas received the record lowest rainfall. On the other hand, many areas in the northern half of the country recorded above average rainfall, with places such as Lunga District, in Luapula Province and Chama and Isoka Districts in Muchinga Province experiencing unprecedented floods.

Mr Speaker, in order for our people to be ready for the current rainy season, allow me to share with this august House the 2019/2020 rainy season forecast. The forecast, generally, indicates that much of Zambia is likely to receive normal to above normal rainfall during this rainy season. The season is likely to be established by mid-November over most parts of the country. Nevertheless, areas over the Northern Province, Luapula Province, North-Western Province, Copperbelt Province and Western Province are likely to experience rainfall activities by October, 2019, as we have begun to already witness in the northern part of the country.

However, this notwithstanding, there is a high likelihood of dry spells around February, especially over the southern part of the country. There is also a high chance that most of the rainfall will be received in the months of November and December, 2019 and January and March, 2020.

Mr Speaker, the forecast for the whole season has been segmented into four periods of three month totals, each to indicate monthly performance as the season progresses, as follows:

For the period October, November and December, there is high chance of receiving normal to above normal rainfall for most parts of the country. However, the areas around Isoka, Chama, Mpika, Mbala, Nakonde, Mpulungu, Chinsali, Mungwi and Lundazi districts will most likely receive normal to below normal rainfall. For the period November, December and January, the

southern half of the country is likely to receive above normal rainfall, while the northern half has a high chance of receiving normal to above normal rainfall with the exception of the north-eastern areas where there is a likelihood of normal to below normal rainfall.

Mr Speaker, as we progress into December, January and February, there is a high likelihood of receiving normal to above normal rainfall for the southern half of the country, while the northern half has a high chance of receiving above normal rainfall. In the final three months of the season, January, February and March, the northern half of the country has a high chance of receiving normal to above normal rainfall, while the southern half is likely to receive normal to below normal rainfall.

Sir, let me state that during the current rainy season and indeed in many rainy seasons, dry spells may occur, which in certain circumstances, lead to crop losses. In this regard, I urge our farmers and other stakeholders to regularly get in touch with the Ministry of Transport and Communication to access updated meteorological forecasts.

Mr Speaker, every rainy season is characterised by wide ranging implications on all socio-economic sectors. In this respect, I wish to inform the nation that the 2019/2020 Rainy Season is likely to experience floods and flash floods in prone areas that may cause damage to infrastructure. We may witness increased chances of disease burden to humans, livestock and crops. These experiences may include damage to civil structures such as roads, bridges and culverts, increased chances of disease outbreaks such as cholera, dysentery and typhoid, experience outbreaks of agricultural pests such as army worms and stock borers across the country. That said, I advise hon. Members of the august House and the public in general to take all the necessary precautions to avoid loss of life and property should there be any extreme weather events during this Rainy Season. I want to highlight the need for all sectors to conduct sensitisation programmes regarding good sanitation and hygiene practices, and clearing of drainage systems well in advance to avoid water pools that may serve as a breeding ground for pathogens that may cause waterborne diseases such as cholera and dysentery. In addition, there is great need for institutions to store relief materials, medicines and pesticides that may be required in the course of the Rainy Season.

Sir, may I conclude by stressing that my ministry will continue giving the nation updates on the actual and expected rainfall during the entire Rainy Season. This will be done through radio and television, including other media platforms. I further urge our farmers countrywide to seek expert guidance from the Ministry of Agriculture for advice on when to plant, what to plant, and the general outlook aspects of crop management. On our part, we will continue working hand in hand with our colleagues from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Water Development, Sanitation and Environmental Protection, and other key stakeholders to ensure the public is kept informed.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.