



Republic of Zambia

STATEMENT BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY, DR EDGAR CHAGWA LUNGU,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA**

DURING THE STATE HOUSE MEDIA RECEPTION

FRIDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER, 2019

GOOD AFTERNOON LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE MEDIA.

I WELCOME YOU TO STATE HOUSE, AND I AM DELIGHTED THAT WE FINALLY MET WITH ALL OF YOU.

I HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SIMPLY MEET YOU AND TO SAY THANK YOU FOR THE GREAT WORK THAT YOU PUT IN, DAY IN DAY OUT, TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR GREAT COUNTRY.

I AM TRULLY HONOURED TO HOST YOU AND TO ASSURE YOU THAT AS THE FOURTH ESTATE YOUR ROLE CONTRIBUTES IMMENSELY TO OUR FLEDGLING DEMOCRACY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THE MEDIA CAN BUILD OR DESTROY A NATION, THEREFORE, LET ME URGE YOU NOT TO BE SWAYED BY THE POLITICAL SHENANIGANS OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD AS YOU DO YOUR PROFESSIONAL WORK.

I AM PROUD THAT SINCE THE PATRIOTIC GOVERNMENT ASSUMED OFFICE, THERE HAVE BEEN GREAT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MEDIA, INCLUDING THE DIGITISING OF THE AIRWAVES.

CONVERSELY, WE HAVE SEEN THE EXPANSION OF THE MEDIA INDUSTRY WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TAKING THE LEAD IN THE FORMATION OF RADIO AND TELEVISION COMPANIES.

WE HAVE ALSO SEEN THE RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG ZAMBIANS TO TAKE UP POSITIONS IN THESE NEW BROADCASTING COMPANIES.

I KNOW AND UNDERSTAND THAT THE SAME HAS NOT BEEN THE CASE IN THE PRINT INDUSTRY AND THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE; THE WORLD HAS MOVED ONTO ONLINE PUBLICATIONS AT A SPEED UNIMAGINABLE SINCE THE ADVENT OF NEW MEDIA.

I, THEREFORE, URGE THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE STILL PRINTING NOT TO FEEL DEPRESSED, BUT TO INNOVATE SO THAT YOU SURVIVE THE HARSH REALITY BROUGHT ABOUT BY ONLINE PUBLISHING.

LET ME DARE SAY THAT THERE ARE STILL THOUSANDS OF READERS WHO WOULD STILL PREFER HARD COPIES TO ONLINE PUBLISHING.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

WHILE I APPLAUD THE GREAT STRIDES THAT YOU ARE MAKING IN YOUR INDUSTRY, I WOULD BE REMISS IF I DID NOT POINT OUT MY OWN OBSERVATIONS REGARDING YOUR PRODUCTS.

I HAVE OBSERVED GLARING DISREGARD FOR JOURNALISM ETHOS COUPLED WITH SUSTAINED POLITICAL BIAS. MUCH AS I UNDERSTAND THAT I AM THE CURRENT TENANT OF STATE HOUSE, AND I AM SUSCEPTIBLE TO CRITICISM, I AM APPALLED AT THE AMOUNT OF EFFORT PUT IN BY YOU THE MEDIA IN SEEING CONFLICT BETWEEN MY POLITICAL RIVALS AND I.

CRITICISM IS HEALTHY IN A DEMOCRACY BUT SURELY THOSE FEW POLITICIANS THAT ARE QUOTED ON A DAILY BASIS ARE NOT THE ONLY ZAMBIANS WHO HAVE VOICES. THERE ARE MILLION VOICES OUT THERE WITH FAIR OPINIONS WHO DESERVE TO BE HEARD.

I, THEREFORE, URGE YOU NOT TO BE CRUSADERS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN POLITICAL PLAYERS BUT TO PROVIDE A FORUM FOR PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND COMPROMISE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

YOU NEED TO CREATE A CHASM BETWEEN JOURNALISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA CRAZE. THIS, NO ONE CAN DO APART FROM YOURSELVES.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS FOR ALL; WHILE JOURNALISM IS FOR TRAINED COMMUNICATORS. BUT IF YOU ALLOW ALL AND SUNDRY TO MASQUERADE AS JOURNALISTS, YOUR PROFESSION WILL PERISH.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THE COMING OF SOCIAL MEDIA HAS MEANT INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS, THEMSELVES, PASSING CONTENT THAT THEY HAVE NO DIRECT ROLE IN PRODUCING, AND WITHOUT VERIFICATION.

WITH SOCIAL MEDIA WE HAVE SEEN THAT THE TRUTH IS LESS IMPORTANT AND THE MORE EXAGGERATED OR INACCURATE THE COMMUNICATION IS, THE MORE IT SEEMS TO ATTRACT READERSHIP.

THIS IS THE TRAGEDY THAT WE FACE TODAY.

THE PUZZLE IS WHETHER OUR CITIZENS ARE SUSCEPTIBLE TO BELIEVING WHAT HAS COME TO BE KNOWN AS FAKE NEWS.

AS WALTER LIPPMANN PUT IT IN 1920, "THERE CAN BE NO LIBERTY FOR A COMMUNITY WHICH LACKS THE INFORMATION BY WHICH TO DETECT LIES."

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THE QUESTION STILL STANDS; DO OUR PEOPLE BELIEVE EVERYTHING THEY READ ON SOCIAL MEDIA? IF THE ANSWER IS YES; THEN WE NEED TO FIND A WAY OF EDUCATING THEM ABOUT HOW TO DETECT LIES IN THE INFORMATION THEY COME ACROSS; IF NO; THEN WE NEED TO USE THE SAME PLATFORM TO REPLY TO THE PURVEYORS OF FAKE NEWS AND CALL THEIR BLUFF.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

LET ME NOW DISCUSS THE GENERAL DEVELOPMENTS IN OUR ECONOMY.

GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO ENSURING THAT DEBT IS CONTAINED WITHIN SUSTAINABLE LEVELS THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF AUSTERITY MEASURES. INFLATION WAS CONTAINED WITHIN THE TARGET RANGE OF 6-8 PERCENT IN THE FIRST FIVE MONTHS OF 2019 SUPPORTED BY APPROPRIATE MONETARY POLICY INTERVENTIONS.

IN THE RECENT PAST, INFLATIONARY PRESSURE INCREASED MAINLY DUE TO LOW AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT. THEREFORE, INFLATION INCREASED TO AN AVERAGE OF 9.6 PERCENT; THEREBY BREACHING THE TARGET RANGE.

THE EXCHANGE RATE OF KWACHA AGAINST MAJOR TRADING CURRENCIES HAS BEEN RELATIVELY STABLE, AVERAGING ABOUT K12.6 PER UNITED STATES DOLLARS. COST OF BORROWING DOMESTICALLY, HOWEVER, HAS CONTINUED TO BE HIGH.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

MY GOVERNMENT HAS IMPLEMENTED A NUMBER OF POLICY MEASURES THIS YEAR TO MAINTAIN DEBT WITHIN SUSTAINABLE LEVELS, PROTECT THE VULNERABLE, AND REDUCE THE COST OF RUNNING GOVERNMENT. THESE INCLUDE:

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1. **PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT:** MY GOVERNMENT OPERATIONALISED THE PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACT OF 2018. THIS IS PROVIDING AN INSTITUTIONAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY, OVERSIGHT AND CONTROL OF PUBLIC FUNDS FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY.

 2. **REVENUE ENHANCING MEASURES:** THE ROLL OUT OF THE TREASURY SINGLE ACCOUNT WAS COMPLETED AND DIGITISING OF GOVERNMENT PROCESSES CONTINUED IN 2019. THIS WILL IMPROVE REVENUE COLLECTION AND ENHANCE SERVICE DELIVERY.

 3. **EXPENDITURE MANAGEMENT:** EXPENDITURE REDUCING MEASURES HAVE CONTINUED TO BE IMPLEMENTED. THESE INCLUDE; LIMITING FINANCING TO PROJECTS THAT ARE AT LEAST 80 PERCENT COMPLETE; IMPLEMENTATION OF COST CUTTING MEASURES RELATING TO TRAVEL OF SENIOR OFFICIALS; PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE THROUGH RINGFENCING THE RESOURCES TO SOCIAL SECTORS; AND THE CLEANING UP OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE WAGE BILL.

 4. **ENERGY REFORMS:** PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE ON SECTOR WIDE ENERGY REFORMS, INCLUDING ELECTRICITY AND PETROLEUM. GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION IS TO ENABLE 100 PERCENT PRIVATE SECTOR IMPORTATION OF FUEL AND GET TARIFFS FOR ELECTRICITY TO COST REFLECTIVE LEVELS.

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5. **PENSION REFORMS:** GOVERNMENT IS COGNISANT THAT THE PENSION SYSTEMS IN THE CURRENT FORM ARE NOT SUSTAINABLE, CONTRIBUTING TO ACCUMULATING OF ARREARS AND AFFECTING THE LIVELIHOOD OF PENSIONERS. EFFORTS ARE UNDERWAY TO RESTRUCTURE THE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM IN ORDER TO EXPAND THE SCOPE OF BENEFITS UNDER THE NATIONAL SCHEME AND ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PENSION SYSTEM. CABINET WILL SOON BE REVIEWING PROPOSED REFORMS FOR APPROVAL.
6. **DEBT MANAGEMENT:** THE MEDIUM-TERM DEBT STRATEGY HAS BEEN DEVELOPED TO INFORM THE PATH FOR DEBT SUSTAINABILITY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

MY GOVERNMENT IS CONVINCED THAT AS A COUNTRY WE ARE ABLE TO GENERATE ADEQUATE RESOURCES INTERNALLY TO MEET OUR AMBITIOUS DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.

HOWEVER, IT IS REGRETTABLE TO NOTE THAT THIS HAS BEEN COMPROMISED BY LOW TAX COMPLIANCE LEVEL AND LEAKAGES RESULTING FROM COLLUSION BETWEEN TAXPAYERS AND SOME OF OUR OFFICERS. THIS COMPROMISES TAX REVENUE COLLECTION AND THOSE FOUND ENGAGING IN SUCH ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES WILL BE DEALT WITH SEVERELY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

IT IS CLEAR FROM NUMEROUS CONCERNS RAISED THAT GOVERNMENT NEEDED TO REVERSE THE INTENTION TO REPLACE VALUE ADDED TAX (VAT) WITH SALES TAX.

IN VIEW OF THIS DEVELOPMENT, I EXPECT THE MINISTER OF FINANCE THROUGH THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL OF THE ZAMBIA REVENUE AUTHORITY TO ENSURE ALL COMPLIANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGES SURROUNDING VAT ARE DEALT WITH WITHOUT FAIL.

FURTHER, I EXPECT THE ZAMBIA REVENUE AUTHORITY TO STRENGTHEN TAX COMPLIANCE AND ENSURE INTEGRITY AND PROFESSIONALISM AMONG ITS STAFF.

IN THE SAME VEIN, LET ME IMPLORER THE MINISTER OF FINANCE TO ENSURE SKEWED BUSINESS ACTIVITIES IN CLEARING AND FREIGHT FORWARDING TOWARDS A FEW CUSTOMS CLEARING AGENTS IS ADDRESSED.

THIS ANOMALY WHERE OVER 80 PERCENT OF THE CUSTOMS CLEARANCE IS DONE BY A FEW CLEARING COMPANIES WHILE OVER 800 SMALL CLEARING COMPANIES ARE FIGHTING FOR A PALTRY 20 PERCENT SHOULD BE CORRECTED.

CONVERSELY, SINCE THE ENACTMENT OF THE NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION COUNCIL ACT OF 2003, WE HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES IN ENSURING THAT LOCAL CONTRACTORS ARE EMPOWERED THROUGH THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 20 PERCENT SUBCONTRACT POLICY.

IT HAS BEEN OBSERVED THAT THERE IS NO PROBLEM WITH CONTRACTS SIGNED BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND FOREIGN CONTRACTORS YET THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH CONTRACTS SIGNED BETWEEN FOREIGN CONTRACTORS AND SUBCONTRACTORS IN RESPECT TO RATES APPLIED, WHICH ARE MUCH LOWER FOR SUBCONTRACTORS.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, SCOPE OF WORKS FOR LOCAL CONTRACTORS ARE ONLY ON DRAINAGES AND ROAD MARKINGS. THIS HAS RESULTED IN VERY LIMITED SKILLS TRANSFER. ADDED TO THIS, CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS ARE PROCURED AT VERY HIGH COST FROM THE SAME FOREIGN CONTRACTORS.

THE ROAD DEVELOPMENT AGENCY IS, THEREFORE, DIRECTED TO CARRY OUT A REVIEW OF ALL CONTRACTS SIGNED BETWEEN FOREIGN CONTRACTORS AND LOCAL CONTRACTORS AND ENSURE STRICT COMPLIANCE TO THIS POLICY INTENDED TO CREATE CAPACITY BUILDING AND EMPOWER LOCAL CONTRACTORS. I EXPECT A DETAILED REPORT WITHIN 14 DAYS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

IN JANUARY 2018, I ELEVATED THE POSITION OF CONTROLLER OF INTERNAL AUDIT TO PERMANENT SECRETARY LEVEL TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE CONTROLS ARE PUT IN PLACE FOR PRUDENT UTILISATION OF GOVERNMENT RESOURCES.

FOR THE OFFICE OF CONTROLLER OF INTERNAL AUDIT TO BE EFFECTIVE AT ALL LEVELS TO PROMOTE ACCOUNTABILITY, THERE IS URGENT NEED FOR THE SECRETARY TO THE CABINET TO INTRODUCE DIRECTORATES OF INTERNAL AUDIT IN ALL GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES. THESE WILL BE EXPECTED TO REPORT DIRECTLY TO RESPECTIVE CONTROLLING OFFICERS TO PROVIDE NECESSARY CHECKS AND BALANCES.

THIS MEASURE WILL ADDRESS THE EXISTING IRREGULARITY OF HAVING DIRECTORATES IN MINISTRIES UNDER THE ACCOUNTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE WHILE THE CONTROLLER OF INTERNAL AUDIT HAS NONE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

MY GOVERNMENT IS CONVINCED THAT MEANINGFUL JOBS CAN ONLY BE CREATED THROUGH INDUSTRIALISATION. UNDER THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL POLICY, GOVERNMENT AIMS TO PROMOTE AN EXPORT-ORIENTED INDUSTRIALISATION. SO FAR, PROGRESS HAS BEEN RECORDED IN THE EXPORT OF PRODUCTS SUCH AS CEMENT, HONEY AND DETERGENTS IN LINE WITH THE NATIONAL LOCAL CONTENT STRATEGY.

IN ADDITION, LOCALLY OWNED SMALL ENTERPRISES IN FIELDS SUCH AS CARPENTRY AND FOUNDRY ARE BEING SUPPORTED THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INDUSTRIAL YARDS IN SOLWEZI, NDOLA, KASAMA, MONGU AND CHIPATA DISTRICTS WHICH ARE EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED THIS YEAR, WHILE THOSE IN KITWE, LUSAKA AND MANSA, WILL BE COMPLETED IN 2020.

ONCE COMPLETED, THESE YARDS WILL RESULT IN INCREASED ACCESS TO PROCESSING FACILITIES AND THE CREATION OF MORE THAN 4,000 DIRECT JOBS.

I THEREFORE, DIRECT THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE, TRADE AND INDUSTRY TO ENSURE THE COMPLETION DATES FOR THE INDUSTRIAL YARDS ARE NOT MISSED FOR OUR PEOPLE TO HAVE ACCESS TO THESE FACILITIES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

WE ALL KNOW THAT MANY COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD, INCLUDING OUR OWN, ARE FACING A MYRIAD OF CHALLENGES TODAY DUE TO THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

ON 13TH SEPTEMBER, 2019 WHEN I TOLD PARLIAMENT ABOUT THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND HOW IT WAS GOING TO IMPACT ON OUR LIVES, SOME PEOPLE MADE A JOKE OUT OF IT.

TWO MONTHS LATER TODAY, THE COUNTRY HAS FELT THE FULL IMPORT OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

IN MY SEPTEMBER SPEECH, I SAID;

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A VERY SERIOUS MATTER THAT SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN LIGHTLY. THE INABILITY TO HAVE ADEQUATE WATER, GENERATE ENOUGH POWER, GROW ENOUGH FOOD TO FEED OUR PEOPLE, HAVE ALL BEEN GREATLY CAUSED BY THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

WE ALL SERIOUSLY NEED TO UNDERSTAND AND BEGIN TO APPRECIATE THIS IN DETAIL AND STOP POINTING FINGERS AT EACH OTHER FOR FAILURE TO GROW OUR ECONOMY AT THE DESIRED PACE.

MY WORDS STILL RING TRUE TO THIS VERY DAY.

WHAT WE SHOULD NOT ENTERTAIN TODAY ARE LAMENTATIONS OF YESTERYEAR ABOUT WHO DID WHAT OR DID NOT DO WHAT; RATHER WHAT WE SHOULD ENTERTAIN TODAY IS INNOVATION FOR TODAY AND THE FUTURE.

THEY SAY NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE POWER DEFICIT IN THE COUNTRY HAS IMPACTED HEAVILY ON HOUSEHOLD LEVEL. IT IS REGRETABLE THAT SMALL-SCALE BUSINESSMEN, WHOSE BUSINESSES DEPEND ON ELECTRICITY, HAVE HAD TO ENDURE LONG HOURS WITHOUT ELECTRICITY TO POWER THEIR BUSINESSES.

I FEEL FOR THAT BARBER WHO WORKS HARD TO FEED HIS FAMILY IN MANDEVU, LUSAKA; I FEEL FOR THAT YOUNG BEAUTICIAN IN MASALA, NDOLA, WHOSE SALON BUSINESS IS CRITICALLY AFFECTED BECAUSE OF LOADSHEDDING; WHAT ABOUT THAT WELDER IN CHIWEMPALA, CHINGOLA WHO HAS HAD TO WORK IN THE NIGHT BECAUSE THAT IS WHEN POWER RETURNS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THE LASTING SOLUTION TO THE POWER DEFICIT IS MORE INVESTMENT IN RENEWABLE ENERGY SUCH AS SOLAR. TO THIS EFFECT, I EXPECT ZESCO LIMITED TO FINISH THE SOLAR PROJECT BY MID-NEXT YEAR. THIS 120 MEGA WATT SOLAR PV UNDER THE GETFIT PROGRAMME HAS SIX 20 MEGA WATT PROJECTS AND THEY WILL REACH COMMERCIAL OPERATION DATE IN THE THIRD QUARTER OF 2020.

IN THE SHORT TERM, HOWEVER, MY GOVERNMENT HAS MADE A DECISION TO IMPORT POWER FROM ESKOM OF SOUTH AFRICA. THE INITIAL REQUIREMENT IS TO PAY 44 MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS OF WHICH 10 MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS HAS ALREADY BEEN PAID.

NEXT WEEK, 14 MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS WILL BE PAID AND ANYTIME SOON THEREAFTER, THE REST OF THE AMOUNT WILL BE SETTLED.

THESE IMPORTS ARE A STOP-GAP MEASURE AS WE WAIT FOR THE COMING ON BOARD OF 750 MEGA WATTS OF POWER FROM KAFUE GORGE LOWER IN EARLY MARCH NEXT YEAR. THE PROJECT IS AT 80 PERCENT COMPLETION.

OUR EXPERTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE PREDICTED THAT THE 2019/2020 RAINY SEASON WILL GIVE US NORMAL TO ABOVE NORMAL RAIN. THIS MEANS THAT IN 2020, WE EXPECT OUR HYDRO-POWER STATIONS TO REVERT TO NORMAL PRODUCTION.

IN ADDITION, MY GOVERNMENT IS SCALING UP POWER PRODUCTION FROM SOLAR TO MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE NOW AND IN FUTURE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

INTERVENTIONS SUCH AS AFFORESTATION AND REFORESTATION, PROMOTION OF CONSERVATION FARMING AND DIVERSIFICATION OF AGRICULTURE, ARE KEY IN ENSURING OUR ENVIRONMENT IS USED IN A SUSTAINABLE WAY AS WE PURSUE OUR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL AGENDA.

GOING FORWARD, I AM DIRECTING THE MINISTER OF LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO DRAW UP PROGRAMMES TO SENSITISE CITIZENS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING IN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, AND PRESERVATION OF OUR FORESTS TO MITIGATE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

CITIZENS MUST BE ENCOURAGED TO ADOPT TREE-PLANTING AS A WAY OF LIFE TO RESTORE OUR NATURAL FORESTS.

FURTHER, THE MINISTRY IS EXPECTED TO DRAW UP ROBUST PROGRAMMES AIMED AT COMBATING INDISCRIMINATE CUTTING OF TREES THROUGHOUT ZAMBIA.

TIME TO ACT IS NOW, IF NOTHING IS DONE BY OURSELVES NOW, I AM AFRAID WE ARE CONDEMNING FUTURE GENERATIONS TO EVEN HARSHER CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS, AND POSTERITY WILL JUDGE US HARSHLY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR HAS BEEN DRASTICALLY AFFECTED BY THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE WHICH INCLUDE DROUGHTS, FLOODS AND THE OUTBREAK OF PESTS AND DISEASES CAUSED BY EXTREME TEMPERATURES.

THE PRODUCTION OF CROPS HAS DECLINED AND WHAT IS OF GREAT CONCERN IS THAT PRODUCTION OF OUR COUNTRY'S STAPLE CROP, MAIZE HAS BEEN DECLINING.

THE PRODUCTION OF MAIZE IN THE 2018/2019 FARMING SEASON STOOD AT **TWO MILLION AND FOUR THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND SEVEN** METRIC TONNES, FROM THE 2017/2018 PRODUCTION OF TWO MILLION THREE HUNDRED AND NINETY FOUR THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND SEVEN METRIC TONNES.

THIS REPRESENTS A REDUCTION OF 16.3 PERCENT. THE QUANTITY OF MAIZE PRODUCED IN THE LAST FARMING SEASON WAS ONLY ENOUGH TO MEET OUR NATIONAL CONSUMPTION.

WHAT HAS EXERTED PRESSURE ON OUR NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY, HOWEVER, IS RAMPANT SMUGGLING OF MAIZE AND MEALIE MEAL TO NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES AND PANIC BUYING AND SPECULATION BY SOME PRIVATE SECTOR PLAYERS.

FURTHER, THE CHALLENGE OF ELECTRICITY POWER SUPPLY AND LOADSHEDDING HAS INCREASED THE COST OF PRODUCTION OF MEALIE MEAL. ALL THESE FACTORS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE INCREASE IN MEALIE MEAL PRICES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

MY GOVERNMENT HAS NOT JUST STOOD BY. WE ARE WORKING ROUND THE CLOCK TO ADDRESS THE THREATS TO OUR NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY.

MY GOVERNMENT HAS ISSUED A STATUTORY INSTRUMENT ON MAIZE AND MEALIE MEAL ILLEGAL EXPORTS. THE SI WILL ENSURE THAT ANYONE FOUND ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE LAW IS FACED WITH HARSH PENALTIES, WHICH INCLUDE THE EXTENSION OF A CUSTODIAL SENTENCE FOR WOULD BE WRONGDOERS.

THIS MEASURE IS AIMED AT DETERRING POTENTIAL WRONGDOERS FROM ENGAGING IN SMUGGLING.

I WISH TO INFORM YOU THAT I AM VERY HAPPY WITH REPORTS I AM RECEIVING THAT INDICATE THAT CONTINGENCY MEASURES ARE IN PLACE TO ENSURE THAT THERE WILL BE NO SHORTAGES OF MAIZE AND MEALIE MEAL FROM NOW GOING INTO THE NEXT HARVEST IN 2020.

MY GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO PUT IN PLACE MEASURES THAT WILL ENSURE RELIEF MAIZE AND MEALIE MEAL IS AVAILABLE UNDER THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION UNIT.

ALSO, MY GOVERNMENT HAS PARTNERED WITH MILLERS IN SOUTHERN AND WESTERN PROVINCES TO STABILISE THE SUPPLY OF MAIZE AND MEALIE MEAL.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I WISH TO ASSURE THE NATION THAT MY GOVERNMENT WILL NOT STAND ASIDE AND ALLOW A SITUATION WHERE MEALIE MEAL PRICES RISE UNCONTROLLABLY.

THE FOOD RESERVE AGENCY HAS FACILITATED AN AGREEMENT OF PRIVATE SECTOR PLAYERS, REPRESENTED BY THE GRAIN TRADERS ASSOCIATION OF ZAMBIA AND THE MILLERS ASSOCIATION OF ZAMBIA TO ENSURE THAT MAIZE SUPPLY AND PRICES OF MEALIE MEAL REMAIN STABLE BETWEEN NOW AND THE NEXT HARVEST.

THE AGREEMENT WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR IS CURRENTLY BEING ACTUALISED BY THE FOOD RESERVE AGENCY AND VERY SOON THE BENEFITS WILL BE SEEN BY ALL.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I HAVE OFTEN SHARED THAT TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE OF ESCALATING MEALIE MEAL PRICES, THE ONLY SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION IS TO INCREASE MAIZE PRODUCTION IN THE COUNTRY. YOU WILL AGREE THAT PRODUCTION CAN ONLY INCREASE IF FARMERS ARE PAID WHAT THEY DESERVE FOR THEIR PRODUCE. I AM, THEREFORE, URGING ALL FARMERS TO GO FLAT OUT TO GROW MAIZE AND OTHER CROPS OF THEIR CHOICE. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT YOUR INVESTMENT IS SAFE AND PROTECTED.

MY GOVERNMENT, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH COOPERATING PARTNERS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR, IS AGGRESSIVELY PROMOTING CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE THROUGH PHYSICAL AND ELECTRONIC METHODS.

WITH MEASURES I HAVE HIGHLIGHTED, COUPLED WITH THE EARLY DISTRIBUTION OF INPUTS TO FARMERS WHICH GOVERNMENT HAS MANAGED TO DO, I AM CONFIDENT BEYOND ANY REASONABLE DOUBT THAT MAIZE PRODUCTION WILL INCREASE, COME THE END OF THE CURRENT FARMING SEASON.

AS AN INTERIM MEASURE, I EXPECT THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE THROUGH THE FOOD RESERVE AGENCY TO FIND A WAY OF OFFLOADING CHEAPER MAIZE TO MILLERS TO STABILISE MEALIE MEAL PRICES ON THE MARKET.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

THE CONSTRUCTION OF DAMS, WHICH IS CURRENTLY GOING ON THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, WILL LEAD TO INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY. THIS WILL LESSEN DEPENDANCY ON RAINFED AGRICULTURE. THIS PROJECT WILL ENSURE AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES ARE CARRIED OUT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, THEREBY IMPROVING FOOD SECURITY AT HOUSEHOLD AND NATIONAL LEVELS.

IN ADDITION, MY GOVERNMENT IS WORKING TIRELESSLY TO ENSURE THAT FARMERS HAVE THEIR INPUTS ON TIME, AND THAT ALL FARMERS THAT SOLD MAIZE TO THE FOOD RESERVE AGENCY ARE PAID PROMPTLY.

GIVEN THE FAVOURABLE RAIN FORECAST FOR THE **2019/2020** FARMING SEASON AND ALL THINGS BEING EQUAL, WE ARE LIKELY TO HAVE A GOOD HARVEST IN THIS FARMING SEASON. THEREFORE, I, EXPECT PRICES OF MEALIE MEAL TO STABILISE AT AFFORDABLE LEVELS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO INVEST IN KEY HEALTH SYSTEMS; NAMELY HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH, HEALTH CARE FINANCING, HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE, HEALTH SECURITY, ESSENTIAL MEDICINES, VACCINES AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES, AMONG OTHERS.

MALARIA ACCOUNTS FOR 18% OF ALL DEATHS IN OUR HEALTH FACILITIES BUT ZAMBIA HAS RECORDED A 50 PERCENT REDUCTION IN MALARIA DEATHS IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS AND THIS IS DUE TO INTERVENTIONS SUCH AS SPRAYING.

DURING THE **2017/2018** SEASON, MY GOVERNMENT DISTRIBUTED 10.7 MILLION NETS AND SPRAYED AGAINST MOSQUITOES 95 PERCENT OF THE TARGETED HOUSEHOLDS.

ZAMBIA IS ON COURSE TO ATTAINING HIV EPIDEMIC CONTROL BY 2020 IN LINE WITH THE UNAIDS GLOBAL FAST TRACK TARGETS OF ATTAINING 90.90.90. AS AT SEPTEMBER 2019, ZAMBIA STOOD AT 92.90.89. THE 90.90.90 TARGETS CALL FOR AT LEAST 90 PERCENT OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV KNOWING THEIR HIV STATUS.

DUE TO MY GOVERNMENT'S ROBUST CRUSADE AGAINST HIV/AIDS, AT LEAST 90 PERCENT OF THOSE WHO ARE HIV POSITIVE ARE ON ANTI-RETROVIRAL THERAPY AND 90 PERCENT OF THOSE ON TREATMENT ARE ATTAINING VIRAL SUPPRESSION. OF THE 1,2 MILLION PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV IN ZAMBIA, 1,070,000 ARE ON ANTI-RETROVIRAL THERAPY AND WE ARE CONFIDENT COME 2020, THE GAP SHALL BE CLOSED.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

MY GOVERNMENT IS AIMING TO RECRUIT 30,000 HEALTH CARE WORKERS BY 2021. AS AT OCTOBER 2019, A TOTAL OF 21,159 HEALTH CARE WORKERS HAD BEEN RECRUITED.

IN ADDITION, THE MINISTRY TARGETS TO PRODUCE 500 MEDICAL DOCTORS WHO ARE SPECIALISTS IN VARIOUS FIELDS BY 2021 AND AS AT OCTOBER, 2019 A TOTAL OF 250 SPECIALISTS WERE IN TRAINING. FURTHER PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE LEVY MWANAWASA MEDICAL UNIVERSITY, WITH 3,076 STUDENTS ENROLLED IN VARIOUS HEALTH PROGRAMS THIS YEAR.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THE NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME WILL CONTRIBUTE TO PROVISION OF SOUND FINANCING TO THE HEALTH SECTOR AND CATALYZE ZAMBIA'S ATTAINMENT OF UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE.

ON THE OTHER HAND, THE HEALTH SECTOR CONTINUED ESTABLISHING REGIONAL MEDICAL STORES HUBS WITH CHIPATA, CHOMA, MANSA, MPIKA AND LUANSHYA OPERATIONAL. IN ADDITION, MEDICAL STORES THIS YEAR EXPANDED ITS STORAGE CAPACITY FROM 7,000 PALLETS TO 32,000 PALLETS, A PROJECT WHICH I COMMISSIONED.

JUST LAST WEEK HUGE CONSIGNMENTS OF ASSORTED DRUGS FOR VARIOUS AILMENTS, INCLUDING MALARIA, TUBERCULOSIS, AND HIV WERE DISTRIBUTED TO ALL PROVINCES, A SIGN THAT THE NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE ACT AND THE DRUG POLICY ARE ALREADY HAVING A POSITIVE IMPACT.

AND OUT OF THE 650 HEALTH POSTS UNDER CONSTRUCTION, A TOTAL OF 362 HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND IN USE, WITH 59 COMPLETED IN 2019. A TOTAL OF 20 MINI HOSPITALS OUT OF THE 108 HAVE REACHED 90 PERCENT COMPLETION.

OUT OF THE 36 DISTRICT HOSPITALS UNDER CONSTRUCTION, SEVEN HAVE BEEN COMPLETED IN 2019 BRINGING THE TOTAL NUMBER TO 16. TWO GENERAL HOSPITALS ARE UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN PETAUKE AND CHINSALI AND ARE AT 90 PERCENT AND 80 PERCENT COMPLETION, RESPECTIVELY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

LET ME CONCLUDE MY REMARKS BY THANKING COOPERATING PARTNERS WHO HAVE SO FAR MOBILISED **24.1** MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS TOWARDS HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN AREAS WHERE THERE HAVE BEEN A FOOD DEFICIT DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATING UNIT HAS SINCE RELEASED 55,000 TONNES OF RELIEF FOOD TO THE AFFECTED DISTRICTS AND AN OPERATIONAL COST OF EIGHTEEN MILLION, SIX HUNDRED AND FIFTY ONE THOUSAND, ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY EIGHT KWACHA ACROSS THE COUNTRY, BENEFITING APPROXIMATELY 2.3 MILLION PEOPLE.

IN ADDITION, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN DRILLING BOREHOLES IN AREAS THAT HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCING WATER SHORTAGES OWING TO THE DROUGHT SITUATION. THESE BORES HAVE BEEN PUT IN MPIKA, NYIMBA, KAZUNGULA, LUANSHYA, GWEMBE AND CHOMA, AMONG OTHER AREAS, IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER COOPERATING PARTNERS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

I COULD GO ON AND ON DISCUSSING WHAT GOVERNMENT IS DOING FOR THE GOOD OF THE COUNTRY BUT I KNOW THAT TODAY YOU HAVE HAD YOUR FILL. SUFFICE IT TO SAY THANK FOR COMING, I AM REALLY HAPPY TO HAVE YOU AND I NOW INVITE A FEW QUESTIONS.