



SPEECH DELIVERED BY

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

**DURING THE NATIONAL YOUTH FORUM
HELD AT MULUNGUSHI CONFERENCE CENTRE**

WEDNESDAY, 11TH MARCH, 2020

THEME: *"I TAKE THE LEAD"*

- **HONOURABLE EMMANUEL MULENGA MP, MINISTER OF YOUTH, SPORT AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT;**
- **MR. DAVIES MWILA, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT;**
- **MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT;**
- **HONOURABLE CABINET MINISTERS;**
- **THE PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF YOUTH SPORT AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT;**
- **THE UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATOR;**
- **SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS;**
- **REPRESENTATIVES OF COOPERATING PARTNERS;**
- **REPRESENTATIVES OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS**
- **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS;**
- **THE YOUTH OF ZAMBIA;**
- **MEMBERS OF THE PRESS;**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:**

I AM TRULY DELIGHTED TO JOIN OUR YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN ON THE OCCASION MARKING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 2020 NATIONAL YOUTH FORUM WHICH HAS BEEN ORGANISED AS PART OF THE ACTIVITIES TO COMMEMORATE THE NATIONAL YOUTH DAY WHICH FALLS ON 12TH MARCH, 2020.

THE THEME FOR THE 2020 NATIONAL YOUTH DAY IS, AND I QUOTE **“I TAKE THE LEAD”** END OF QUOTE.

THE THEME IS APPROPRIATE AND IT SHOULD SET YOU THINKING AS YOUTH ON TAKING THE LEAD; CHARTING THE COURSE ON WHAT YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO DO?

I BELIEVE THE THEME IS NOT A SURPRISE TO MOST OF YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE ALREADY DOING SOMETHING TO IMPROVE YOURSELVES AND YOUR RESPECTIVE COMMUNITIES.

MY GOVERNMENT FULLY SUPPORTS THIS THEME AS IT IMPRESSES UPON THE YOUTH, TO TAKE CONCRETE ACTION TO TRANSFORM THEIR LIVES FOR THE BETTER.

I AM CONFIDENT THAT YOU, OUR YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN ARE CAPABLE OF MAKING POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. WHILE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE THESE POSITIVE STEPS LIES WITH YOU, MY GOVERNMENT EQUALLY, HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT TO ENABLE YOU REALISE YOUR FULL POTENTIAL.

IT IS AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THAT GOVERNMENT, THROUGH THE MINISTRY RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, HAS CONVENED THIS NATIONAL YOUTH FORUM.

THE **FIRST** OBJECTIVE OF THIS FORUM IS TO GIVE YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS ISSUES THAT AFFECT YOUR LIVES AND PROVIDE YOUR OWN SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES THAT YOU CONTINUE TO FACE.

THE FORUM'S SECOND OBJECTIVE IS TO PROVIDE YOU WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO INTERACT WITH VARIOUS PLAYERS IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT. THIS WILL ENABLE YOU TO LEARN ABOUT THE SERVICES THEY OFFER, AND YOU WILL IN TURN PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON HOW THESE SERVICES CAN BE IMPROVED TO BENEFIT YOU AND YOUR RESPECTIVE COMMUNITIES.

YOUR INTERACTION WITH THE VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS IS TO ENSURE THAT THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND OTHER PARTNERS ARE YOUTH FRIENDLY AND ARE RESPONSIVE TO YOUR NEEDS.

DURING THIS FORUM, I AM CERTAIN THAT YOUR VOICES WILL BE HEARD. THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO TAKE A LEADING ROLE.

THIS PLATFORM IS NOT FOR YOU TO JUST BE SEEN, BUT TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES THAT YOU ENCOUNTER AND OFFERING PRACTICAL AND WORKABLE SOLUTIONS TO THOSE ISSUES THAT YOU CONTINUE TO FACE.

I, THEREFORE, URGE YOU NOT TO SIT BACK AND WAIT FOR HANDOUTS, BUT RATHER, YOU SHOULD BE PROACTIVE AND ENGAGE THE VARIOUS GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES TO ASCERTAIN WHAT PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED AND OFFERED FOR YOU TO BUY INTO THEM.

THIS, HOWEVER, DOES NOT MEAN THAT GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES, PROVINCES AND SPENDING AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE FOR VARIOUS EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES SHOULD RELAX, BUT INSTEAD THEY TOO MUST BE PROACTIVE, AND PROVIDE YOU WITH RELEVANT INFORMATION TO ENABLE YOU MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

MY GOVERNMENT BELIEVES IN YOUR ABILITY TO MAKE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

THIS IS WHY GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED IMPLEMENTING VARIOUS EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES AIMED AT IMPROVING YOUR LIVELIHOODS. I AM AWARE THAT THESE EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES MAY NOT COVER ALL YOUR ASPIRATIONS. HENCE WE ARE MEETING TODAY. WE WANT TO ENSURE THAT WE GET YOUR FEEDBACK TO ENABLE US ADDRESS SOME OF THE GAPS THAT MAY EXIST.

LET ME SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF THE EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES THAT ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED BY MY ADMINISTRATION.

(1) SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR THE OUT OF SCHOOL YOUTH.

MY GOVERNMENT IS PROVIDING LIFE SKILLS TRAINING TO THE OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH THROUGH VARIOUS YOUTH RESOURCE CENTRES TO ENSURE THAT THE YOUTH ACQUIRE PRACTICAL AND LIFE-LONG SKILLS TO ENABLE THOSE YOUTHS THAT ACQUIRE SUCH SKILLS START A BUSINESS OF THEIR OWN AND TAKE CHARGE OF THEIR LIVES. IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING SKILLS TRAINING, GOVERNMENT AND ITS PARTNERS ARE PROVIDING START UP KITS TO SELECTED YOUTHS TO JUMP START THEIR ENTERPRISES.

I AM CONVINCED THAT THE PROVISION OF SKILLS TRAINING TO THE YOUTH WILL IMPROVE THEIR CHANCES OF OBTAINING A JOB OR INDEED, STARTING THEIR OWN ENTERPRISES. SMALL SCALE ENTERPRISES HAVE THE ABILITY TO GROW AND CONTRIBUTE TO JOB CREATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

YOU MAY WISH TO KNOW THAT THE FEES CHARGED BY THE YOUTH RESOURCE CENTRES ARE MINIMAL. FURTHER, IN LINE WITH THE PATRIOTIC FRONT'S PRO-POOR POLICIES, MY GOVERNMENT OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS FOR THOSE WHO ARE UNABLE TO PAY THE FEES THAT ARE CHARGED BY THE YOUTH RESOURCES CENTRES.

(2) YOUTH RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES

FOR THOSE OF YOU INTERESTED IN AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS, MY GOVERNMENT IS IMPLEMENTING THE YOUTH RESETTLEMENT SCHEME WHERE THE YOUTH ARE ALLOCATED PIECES OF LAND TO UNDERTAKE THEIR AGRICULTURE BUSINESS. THE LAND IS GIVEN TO THE DESERVING YOUTHS FOR FREE AND THEY ARE EXPECTED TO MAKE USE OF THE LAND TO EARN A LIVING.

WHILE THIS SCHEME HAS BEEN IN OPERATION FOR SOME TIME, VERY FEW YOUTHS ARE WILLING TO ENGAGE IN AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS. REMEMBER, ZAMBIA IS SURROUNDED BY EIGHT COUNTRIES AND THE MARKET FOR AGRICULTURE PRODUCTS IS IMMENSE. THIS IS AN AREA WHERE YOU CANNOT GO WRONG, WHAT YOU NEED IS CULTIVATING AN INTEREST IN TAKING UP AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS. THE PATRIOTIC FRONT GOVERNMENT HAS PROVIDED YOU WITH THE OPPORTUNITY. I ENCOURAGE YOU TO UTILISE THIS OPPORTUNITY.

(3) AQUACULTURE EMPOWERMENT FUND

GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF FISHERIES AND LIVESTOCK HAS SET ASIDE US\$**29** MILLION FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AQUACULTURE SEED FUND UNDER THE ZAMBIA AQUACULTURE ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (ZAEDP).

THE PROJECT IS AIMED AT ADVANCING THE AQUACULTURE SUBSECTOR AS A VIABLE AND INCLUSIVE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY THROUGH ENHANCED FISH PRODUCTION AND PRODUCTIVITY TO IMPROVE THE LIVELIHOODS OF BENEFICIARIES IN THE FISH VALUE CHAIN.

THE PROJECT IS EXPECTED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC GROWTH AS WELL AS ENHANCE FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IN ZAMBIA.

THE AQUACULTURE SEED FUND IS BEING ADMINISTERED BY THE CITIZENS ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT COMMISSION (CEEC) AND WOULD BENEFIT MORE THAN **3, 000** ENTREPRENEURS AMONG THEM, YOUTH ALONG THE FISH VALUE CHAIN IN ALL THE TEN PROVINCES OF ZAMBIA.

(4) CARGO TRI-CYCLES EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME

FURTHER, THE GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH, SPORT AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT IS IMPLEMENTING THE MOTORISED CARGO YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME. THIS PROGRAMME IS AIMED AT EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE IN SMALL SCALE TRANSPORTATION WITH MOTORISED CARGO TRI-CYCLES FOR EASY MOVEMENT OF SERVICES. THE TRI-CYCLES ARE MEANT FOR THE YOUTHS WHO TRANSPORT DAILY GOODS SUCH AS FLOWERS AND VEGETABLES FOR MARKETEERS.

(5) INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY YOUTH BUSINESS SCHEME.

MY ADMINISTRATION, THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH, SPORT AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT LAUNCHED THE INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME IN 2017. THE PROGRAMME IS AIMED AT SETTING UP OF ICT BUSINESS CENTRES COUNTRY-WIDE.

OVER **600** YOUTHS HAVE ALREADY BENEFITED FROM THIS INITIATIVE AND ARE CURRENTLY OPERATING ICT BUSINESS CENTRES IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. THIS PRESENTS A HUGE OPPORTUNITY FOR THE YOUTH. HOWEVER, THIS TECHNOLOGY HAS TO BE UTILISED CAUTIOUSLY TO UPLIFT YOUR LIVES, AND NOT FOR UNPRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES WHICH WILL ONLY BE HARMFUL TO SOCIETY AND TO YOURSELVES.

(6) REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INTERVENTIONS

THE HEALTH OF THE YOUTH IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE TO MY ADMINISTRATION. IN THIS REGARD, MY GOVERNMENT IS IMPLEMENTING THE COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION FRAMEWORK TARGETING THE OUT OF SCHOOL YOUTHS. THIS PACKAGE IS AIMED AT PROVIDING FACTUAL, ACCURATE AND AGE APPROPRIATE INFORMATION ON SEXUALITY EDUCATION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE SO THAT THEY RECEIVE APPROPRIATE AND USEFUL INFORMATION ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, HIV/AIDS INCLUDING ASSERTIVE LEADERSHIP SKILLS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THERE ARE MANY OTHER INITIATIVES BEING IMPLEMENTED BY MY ADMINISTRATION. EQUALLY, THE COOPERATING PARTNERS, CIVIL SOCIETY AND FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS ARE SUPPLEMENTING GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES ON YOUTH EMPOWERMENT.

CONVERSELY, IT IS DISAPPOINTING TO NOTE THAT WHILE MY GOVERNMENT AND ITS COOPERATING PARTNERS HAVE CONTINUED TO PRIORITISE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES, MOST OF THE BENEFICIARIES HAVE NOT UTILISED BENEFITS PRUDENTLY.

EVALUATIONS HAVE REVEALED THAT MOST OF THE YOUTHS HAVE NOT PAID BACK THE LOANS THAT THEY RECEIVED FROM GOVERNMENT; THEY HAVE NOT PAID FOR VARIOUS START UP EQUIPMENT PROVIDED TO THEM; OR HAVE ABANDONED THE LAND GIVEN TO THEM IN THE RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES.

THIS IS VERY DISCOURAGING AND, YOU THE YOUTH NEED TO CHANGE YOUR MIND SETS, HENCE THE THEME FOR THIS YEAR – ***I TAKE THE LEAD***. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY. BE PATRIOTIC AND PRODUCTIVE. MAKE A POSITIVE CHANGE.

I IMPLORE THE MINISTRY RESPONSIBLE TO INTERROGATE THIS MATTER SERIOUSLY. LET US ESTABLISH WHY OUR YOUTH HAVE ABANDONED THIS PROGRAMME. PERHAPS, WE NEED TO REVISIT IT.

AS I CONCLUDE, I WISH TO THANK OUR COOPERATING PARTNERS, AND CIVIL SOCIETY INCLUDING FAITH BASED ORGANISATIONS FOR RENDERING SUPPORT TO GOVERNMENT. I URGE YOU CONTINUE WITH THIS NOBLE WORK. BY WORKING TOGETHER, I AM CONVINCED THAT WE WILL ACHIEVE THE AGENDA OF LEAVING NO YOUTH BEHIND.

IT IS NOW MY PLEASURE TO OFFICIALLY DECLARE THE 2020 NATIONAL YOUTH FORUM OFFICIALLY OPEN.

**MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL,
I THANK YOU.**