



Republic of Zambia

SPEECH BY

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

**ON THE OCCASION OF COMMEMORATING THE
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

**TO BE HELD AT THE LUSAKA AGRICULTURAL AND
COMMERCIAL SHOWGROUNDS**

ON FRIDAY, 8TH MARCH, 2019

**STATE HOUSE
LUSAKA**

- **HONOURABLE CABINET MINISTERS;**
- **MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT;**
- **ACTING SECRETARY TO THE CABINET;**
- **PERMANENT SECRETARIES;**
- **YOUR WORSHIP THE MAYOR OF LUSAKA;**
- **SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS;**
- **THE UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATOR;**
- **MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS;**
- **REPRESENTATIVES OF RELIGIOUS AND FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS;**
- **PRIVATE SECTOR AND CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS;**
- **INVITED GUESTS;**
- **MEMBERS OF THE PRESS;**
- **DISTINGUISHED GUESTS;**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:**

I AM VERY DELIGHTED TO OFFICIATE AT THIS CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY FOR 2019. THE OBJECTIVE OF CELEBRATING THIS DAY IS TO RECOLLECT THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ACHIEVEMENTS OF WOMEN.

IN THIS REGARD, I WOULD LIKE TO PAY GLOWING TRIBUTE TO THE WOMEN, WHO EARLY IN THE 19TH CENTURY DECIDED TO FIGHT GENDER-BASED OPPRESSION AND DISCRIMINATION AND WIN THE RIGHT TO VOTE. THIS WAS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE IT WAS A WAKE-UP CALL TO THE WORLD ABOUT THE NEED TO RESPECT WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

LET ME ALSO COMMEND THESE WOMEN BECAUSE IT WAS THEIR STRUGGLE AND COURAGE FOR EQUAL TREATMENT WITH MEN THAT LED TO THE DECLARATION OF THE 8TH OF MARCH AS THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

SINCE THEN, THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY HAS EVOLVED AND EMBRACED WOMEN OF DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS. THE DAY HAS NOW BECOME ONE OF APPRECIATION, RESPECT AND LOVE TOWARDS WOMEN, AS WELL AS RECOGNITION FOR THEIR TREMENDOUS CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

THIS YEAR, THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY IS BEING CELEBRATED UNDER THE THEME, "**THINK EQUAL, BUILD SMART, INNOVATE FOR CHANGE.**"

THIS THEME CALLS FOR ALL COUNTRIES INCLUDING ZAMBIA, TO ADOPT A TRANSFORMATIVE AGENDA, INTEGRATED APPROACHES AND EMPLOYMENT OF NEW SOLUTIONS IN TACKLING GENDER INEQUALITIES IN ALL SPHERES OF DEVELOPMENT.

THOUGH PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE AT POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE LEVELS, GENDER INEQUALITIES AND VIOLATION OF WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS HAVE CONTINUED TO BE PERVASIVE IN OUR COMMUNITIES, AND ACROSS ALL SECTORS. THIS IS DESPITE ALL EFFORTS PUT IN OVER THE DECADES.

THEREFORE, THERE IS NEED FOR REVOLUTIONARY THINKING. IT IS TIME TO MAKE EXTRAORDINARY PROGRESS IN TACKLING GENDER INEQUALITIES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

AS A NATION, WE HAVE MADE PROGRESS IN A NUMBER OF AREAS. WE HAVE ACHIEVED PARITY AT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL OF EDUCATION. WE HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING AT STRATEGIC LEVELS INCLUDING IN POLITICS.

THERE ARE MORE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES. WOMEN'S ACCESS TO HEALTH HAS IMPROVED. MORE WOMEN ARE ACCESSING SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES, AND WE ARE CREATING MORE GENDER-FRIENDLY INFRASTRUCTURE.

HOWEVER, THERE IS STILL MORE TO BE DONE. WOMEN ARE STILL OVERBURDENED BY POVERTY. THEY CONTINUE TO FACE CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING JUSTICE, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES.

THE CHALLENGES THAT WOMEN FACE ARE EVEN MORE IN ACCESSING INFRASTRUCTURE, ESPECIALLY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

THE GENDER INEQUALITIES AND DISCRIMINATION CONTINUE TO BE WORSENERD BY DEEP-ROOTED CULTURAL AND TRADITIONAL PRACTICES WHICH PROMOTE MALE DOMINANCE AND THE SUBORDINATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS.

IT IS CLEAR THAT THOUGH WE ARE PROGRESSING WELL IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES IN OUR COUNTRY, WE NEED TO ENHANCE THESE EFFORTS, IF WE ARE TO REALISE THE TARGETS AS SET OUT IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND PLANET **50:50** BY **2030**.

INDEED, AS GOVERNMENT, WE HAVE PROVIDED AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR QUICKENING PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT. THIS WE ARE DOING THROUGH THE FOLLOWING:

- (A)** RATIFICATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW). THIS IS AN INSTRUMENT PUT IN PLACE BY THE UNITED NATIONS TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S RIGHTS;
- (B)** ADOPTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS PART OF THE GUIDING FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING DEVELOPMENT, AS WE SEEK TO ACHIEVE THE VISION **2030**, WHERE ZAMBIA SEEKS TO BE FREE FROM GENDER INEQUALITIES IN ALL SPHERES OF DEVELOPMENT;
- (C)** ADOPTING EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION AMONG ITS NATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND VALUES THROUGH THE CONSTITUTION OF ZAMBIA (AMENDMENT) ACT NO. **2** OF **2016**. IT IS EXPECTED THAT ALL CITIZENS SHALL LIVE BY THESE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES;

- (D)** ENACTING THE GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY ACT NO.**22** OF **2015** IN ORDER TO DEAL WITH THE ROOT CAUSES OF DISCRIMINATION. THIS LAW PROHIBITS ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION ESPECIALLY GENDER BASED DISCRIMINATION;
- (E)** ENACTING THE ANTI-GENDER BASED VIOLENCE ACT NUMBER **1** OF **2011** TO PROTECT THE VICTIMS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE. ITS ENACTMENT WAS A WELCOME INITIATIVE TO RESPOND TO THE VICE OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN ZAMBIA; AND
- (F)** ADOPTING THE NATIONAL GENDER POLICY OF 2014 AND THE 7TH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN WHICH SEEK TO REDUCE DEVELOPMENTAL INEQUALITIES.

I WISH TO APPEAL TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO TAKE KEEN INTEREST IN THESE POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE MEASURES AS THEY PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON TAKING THE GENDER AGENDA FORWARD IN ZAMBIA.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

THE GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT FOR 2018 HAS NOTED A LIKELY EMERGENCE OF NEW GENDER GAPS IN THE AREA OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES, SUCH AS IN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE-RELATED SKILLS.

THE REPORT FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGES THAT ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS AN AREA WHERE HUMAN SKILLS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT IN COMPLEMENTING INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

MY GOVERNMENT WILL THUS CONTINUE TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT THE GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS.

THIS IS BEING DONE IN ORDER TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE WOMEN AND GIRLS' IDEAS AND INFLUENCE IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATIONS WHICH WILL SHAPE THE FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY.

IN LINE WITH MY VISION, TO HAVE A SMART ZAMBIA, WE MUST ENSURE THAT THE GENDER-BASED DIGITAL DIVIDE IS ELIMINATED.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT ZAMBIA IS ALREADY AGGRESSIVELY GOING DIGITAL AT EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT AND THIS WILL RESULT IN NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

AS THIS PROCESS IS BEING PROPELLED FORWARD, WE CAN GUARANTEE THAT OUR COUNTRY IS NOT DEPRIVED OF WOMEN'S TALENT, TO ENSURE THAT INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY WORKS FOR WOMEN, GIRLS, MEN AND BOYS.

THEREFORE, WE SHOULD NOT BE SHY TO EXPLOIT NEW AREAS, BUT INSTEAD BE FORWARD LOOKING, AS WE COLLECTIVELY REFLECT ON OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER.

WE MUST BEGIN TO RAISE AWARENESS AMONG GIRLS AND BOYS EARLY IN THEIR LIFE AND IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM, ON ISSUES OF GENDER EQUALITY. THIS ACTION WILL HAVE AN INTER-GENERATIONAL IMPACT ON REDUCING GENDER INEQUALITIES.

AT THIS POINT, I WISH TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND SALUTE THE FOLLOWING WOMEN WHO HAVE HELPED MOVE THE ZAMBIAN GENDER AGENDA FORWARD:

(A) MS. EDITH ZEWELANI NAWAKWI;

(B) SARAH LUPEKILE LONGWE; AND

(C) LUCY BANDA SICHONE (MAY HER SOUL REST IN PEACE).

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

MY GOVERNMENT, THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, RECOGNISED THESE GALLANT WOMEN DURING THE COMMEMORATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DAY IN 2018.

TODAY, AS WOMEN, YOU CAN PROUDLY WALK INTO ANY INSTITUTION WITHOUT FEAR OF BEING SUBJECTED TO ANY FORM OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON YOUR GENDER. THIS IS SO BECAUSE OF THE INTERVENTIONS THAT THESE WOMEN PIONEERS OF GENDER EQUALITY, MADE.

SO TO THE WOMEN, THE TONE WAS SET BY THESE GREAT WOMEN: THEREFORE, ALWAYS THINK EQUAL, BUILD SMART AND INNOVATE FOR CHANGE IN FIGHTING GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION. DO NOT SUFFER IN SILENCE. CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO AND ENJOY YOUR RIGHTS IN FULL.

AS I CONCLUDE, I WISH TO CONGRATULATE THE WOMEN AND MEN OF ZAMBIA FOR REMAINING RESILIENT AND BELIEVING IN THE JUST CAUSE FOR GENDER EQUALITY. BE ASSURED THAT ONE DAY, GENDER EQUALITY WILL BE A REALITY IN ALL SPHERES OF LIFE IN ZAMBIA.

I ALSO WISH TO THANK, MOST SINCERELY, THOSE INSTITUTIONS WHICH HAVE CONTRIBUTED IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER TO THE SUCCESSFUL HOSTING OF THIS EVENT.

LET US CONTINUE TO LIVE AND APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT WORKING TOGETHER AS WOMEN AND MEN OF THIS GREAT NATION, WE WILL BE ABLE TO TRANSFORM OUR COUNTRY AND ATTAIN DEVELOPMENT.

OUR COAT OF ARMS IS A SYMBOL OF UNITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN. THIS IS CLEARLY DEPICTED AND THAT SHOULD BE OUR SPIRIT TODAY AND IN FUTURE.

LET US ALL, AS A NATION OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY, COMMEMORATE THIS VERY IMPORTANT DAY.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL! GOD BLESS ZAMBIA!

I THANK YOU.