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REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

SPEECH

for the

OFFICIAL OPENING

of the

FIFTH SESSION

of the

TWELFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

by

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

on

Friday, 11thSeptember, 2020

INTRODUCTION

MR SPEAKER,

IT GIVES ME GREAT HONOUR TO ADDRESS PARLIAMENT AND, INDEED, THE NATION AT LARGE ON THIS SPECIAL OCCASION THAT MARKS THE START OF THE FIFTH AND FINAL SESSION OF THE TWELFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

MR SPEAKER,

BEFORE I PROCEED, LET ME REQUEST THE HOUSE TO JOIN ME IN OBSERVING A MOMENT OF SILENCE IN HONOUR OF THE LATE FREEDOM FIGHTER AND VETERAN POLITICIAN, HONOURABLE ALEXANDER GREY ZULU, WHO ANSWERED THE LORD'S CALL ON SUNDAY, 16TH AUGUST, 2020. HONOURABLE GREY ZULU WAS A MEMBER OF THIS AUGUST HOUSE FROM 1964 TO 1991.

DURING THE MOMENT OF SILENCE, LET US ALSO HONOUR THE LATE HONOURABLE MWENYA MUNKONGE, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR LUKASHYA CONSTITUENCY AND THE LATE HONOURABLE RODGERS MWEWA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR MWANSABOMBWE CONSTITUENCY, BOTH OF WHOM DIED ON THAT DARK, SATURDAY, 18TH JULY, 2020.

WE ALSO HONOUR THE LATE FORMER MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, HONOURABLE ANDREW MULENGA, WHO PASSED AWAY ON 23RD JULY, 2020, AND THE LATE FORMER MINISTER OF WORKS AND SUPPLY, HON. EPHRAIM CHIBWE, WHO DIED ON 27TH AUGUST, 2020.

SHALL WE ALL BE UPSTANDING AND OBSERVE A MINUTE OF SILENCE

MAY THEIR SOULS REST IN ETERNAL PEACE.

MR SPEAKER,

I WISH TO COMMEND YOU AND YOUR TWO DEPUTIES FOR PROVIDING EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP DURING THE LAST SESSION. THE HOUSE CONTINUED TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY IN THE MIDST OF THE CHALLENGES POSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

FURTHER, LET ME COMMEND YOU AND YOUR TEAM FOR EMBRACING INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN CONDUCTING THE BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE DURING THE LAST MEETING OF THE FOURTH SESSION.

I ALSO COMMEND HER HONOUR, THE FIRST EVER FEMALE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA AND LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS IN THE HOUSE, MRS. INONGE MUTUKWA WINA, MP, FOR THE ABLE MANNER IN WHICH SHE FACILITATED TRANSACTION OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS.

FROM THE TIME SHE ASSUMED OFFICE IN 2016, SHE HAS BEEN A STEADY AND DEPENDABLE LEADER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS IN THE HOUSE.

LET ME ALSO RECOGNISE THE EFFORTS OF THE CLERK OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND HER STAFF FOR THE SUPPORT RENDERED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE.

MR SPEAKER,

I URGE THE HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO CONTINUE CONDUCTING BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE IN THE 'NEW NORMAL'. THIS MEANS, AT ALL TIMES, ADHERING TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINES TO PROTECT OURSELVES AGAINST COVID-19.

AS A GOVERNMENT, WE WERE GIVEN THE MANDATE TO REDUCE POVERTY AND CREATE PROSPERITY FOR OUR PEOPLE. WE HAVE DELIVERED ON THAT MANDATE AND CONTINUE TO DELIVER. WE HAVE DELIVERED ON INFRASTRUCTURE. WE HAVE DELIVERED ON SOCIAL PROTECTION. WE HAVE DELIVERED IN EDUCATION AND HEALTH, TO MENTION BUT A FEW. AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO DELIVER.

MR SPEAKER,

ALMOST A YEAR AGO WHEN I SAT TO ADDRESS THIS AUGUST HOUSE, WE WERE JUST APPROACHING ONE OF THE HARSHTEST WEATHER CONDITIONS OF OUR TIMES. I SPOKE WITH GRAVE CONCERN ABOUT THE LIKELY GRIM WEATHER PATTERN.

IN, PARTICULAR, I SPOKE ABOUT THE IMPENDING DEBILITATING EL NINO THAT WOULD VISIT OUR REGION AND CAUSE WANTON DISTRESS AMONGST OUR PEOPLE AS A RESULT OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

YES, IT WAS IN THIS HOUSE, ON FRIDAY, 13TH SEPTEMBER, 2019, WHEN I SPOKE TO THE THEME OF MY SPEECH: "ACCELERATING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FOR A BETTER ZAMBIA AMIDST THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE."

I SAID OUR COUNTRY WAS FACING A VERY SERIOUS PROBLEM. THE PROBLEM WE WERE FACING WAS CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS EL NINO EFFECT AND THE IMPACT ON OUR POPULATION. BUT, PERHAPS WHEN I SPOKE IN THIS AUGUST HOUSE, THE FULL CONSEQUENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE HAD NOT BEEN FELT.

ALAS, IT JUST TOOK A FEW MORE MONTHS AND INDEED THE FULL IMPACT OF DROUGHT, ESPECIALLY IN THE EASTERN, SOUTHERN, AND WESTERN PARTS OF OUR COUNTRY WAS FELT. THE RIVERS DRIED, THE RAIN DID NOT FALL, AND THE CROPS WILTED AND DRIED.

I REMEMBER LOOKING AT THE DRY WATERWAYS OF THE LUANGWA RIVER IN THE EASTERN PROVINCE. I REMEMBER THE WATERLESS CLIFF AT OUR MIGHTY VICTORIA FALLS. I REMEMBER WITNESSING THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND MITIGATION UNIT (DMMU) DISTRIBUTING FOOD TO OUR PEOPLE FROM LIVINGSTONE TO KAZUNGULA.

MR SPEAKER,

WHERE WE HAD WATER, WE HAD TOO MUCH OF IT. THE FLOODS OF LUNGA DISTRICT IN LUAPULA PROVINCE AND MAMBWE DISTRICT IN EASTERN PROVINCE COME TO MIND. I REMEMBER HOW THE FLOODS RENDERED OUR PEOPLE DESTITUTE. I RECALL THE EFFORT OF MY GOVERNMENT TO CUSHION THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

IN MY SPEECH TO THIS AUGUST HOUSE, I SPOKE ABOUT THE POWER DEFICIT, AND THE LOADSHEDDING MEANT TO CONSERVE WATER AT THE POWER STATIONS. I SPOKE ABOUT THE IMPACT LOADSHEDDING HAD ON OUR PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY ON SMALL SCALE BUSINESSES.

MR SPEAKER,

I ASKED THIS AUGUST HOUSE A RHETORICAL QUESTION, WHICH WAS: "WHAT DOES A RESILIENT NATION DO IN SUCH A SITUATION?" MY ANSWER WAS, AND I QUOTE MYSELF:

IT REALIGNS ITSELF TO NEW WAYS OF SUSTAINABILITY BY UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT, ADAPTING METHODS OF SURVIVAL AND PUTTING IN PLACE ACTION PLANS THAT MAKE US OVERCOME ANY CHALLENGES AND FORGE AHEAD.

END OF QUOTE.

MR SPEAKER,

I HAVE SPENT MOST OF THE TIME PREACHING THIS MESSAGE OF ENDURANCE, INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP TO OUR PEOPLE. I HAVE VISITED FARMS THAT HAVE ADAPTED TO THESE HARSH REALITIES OF OUR TIMES. I HAVE VISITED BUSINESSES THAT ARE COPING WITH REALITY. AND I HAVE MET PEOPLE LIKE THAT YOUNG MAN AT CHUNGA DUMPSITE, WHO TOGETHER WITH OTHER RESIDENTS, MOSTLY WOMEN, HAVE FORMED COOPERATIVES AND ARE ENGAGED IN COLLECTING WASTE FOR RECYCLING. THERE IS ALSO CHILEKWA MWAMBA, WHO IS INSPIRING FELLOW YOUNG PEOPLE, AND ADULTS, FOR THAT MATTER, TO FORM COOPERATIVES, NOT JUST IN AGRICULTURE BUT IN MANY OTHER SECTORS. THESE AND MANY MORE PEOPLE ARE SHOWING ME THAT IT DOES NOT MATTER WHAT YOU ARE, WHO YOU ARE OR WHERE YOU COME FROM, WITH SHEER DETERMINATION AND ADAPTATION, YOU CAN SURVIVE THE MANY STORMS.

MR SPEAKER,

BUT NO ONE WOULD HAVE ANTICIPATED THAT FOUR MONTHS LATER, AFTER MY SPEECH, THE WORLD WOULD BE STARING IN THE FACE OF DEATH. AT THE WRITING OF THIS SPEECH, OFFICIALLY 894,983 PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD HAD SUCCUMBED TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC, AND THERE WERE 27, 486, 960 CONFIRMED CASES OF THIS STRANGE DISEASE.

IN ZAMBIA 296 PEOPLE HAD DIED, AND 13,112 WERE CONFIRMED CASES. THE GOOD NEWS IS OVER 90% OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC PATIENTS IN ZAMBIA HAVE RECOVERED.

MR SPEAKER,

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS CHANGED THE WORLD. ITS IMPACT ON WORLD ECONOMIES AND SOCIETY IN GENERAL IS UNPRECEDENTED. BUT AS HORIFYING AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS BEEN, IT HAS GIVEN US AN OPPORTUNITY AS HUMANITY TO CHANGE THE WAY WE DO THINGS AND DO THEM BETTER. THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS OPENED OUR EYES TO GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES AROUND US. THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS TAUGHT US WE CAN HAVE VIRTUAL MEETINGS AND SAVE MONEY. THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS SHOWED US HOW TO WORK FROM OUR HOMES AND ACHIEVE THE SAME RESULTS!

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS REVEALED TO US THAT WE CAN FORM COOPERATIVE SHOPS AND SELL OUR LOCAL PRODUCE TO OURSELVES WITHOUT HINDRANCE AND DISDAIN. I, THEREFORE, EXPECT THE MINISTRIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AND COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY TO EMBARK ON A TRANSFORMATIONAL AGENDA THAT WILL SEE TRADING CENTRES SUCH AS SOWETO MARKET IN LUSAKA, CHISOKONE MARKET IN KITWE AND OTHERS BE THE NEW CHAIN STORES WITH ALL THE LOCAL PRODUCE SUCH AS *KALEMBULA*, *CHIBWABWA* AND *KAPENTA*, TO MENTION BUT A FEW.

MR SPEAKER,

MY SPEECH, THEREFORE, WILL FOCUS MORE ON THE SITUATION WE FIND OURSELVES IN, AND HOW, AS A NATION, TOGETHER, IN UNITY, WE CAN AND WE MUST WIN THE WAR. IT DOES NOT MATTER WHO YOU ARE, OR WHERE YOU COME FROM. IT DOES NOT MATTER WHETHER YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN, MOSLEM, HINDU, OR EVEN A HEATHEN. IT DOES NOT MATTER WHETHER YOU ARE PF, UPND, FDD, MMD, UNIP, OR NDC. NOW IS THE TIME TO HOLD OUR HANDS TOGETHER AND RIDE OVER THE SITUATION WE FIND OURSELVES IN AS ONE PEOPLE.

MR SPEAKER,

I WILL, THEREFORE, USE THIS OCCASION TO OUTLINE THE POLICY DIRECTION THAT MY GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN, AMIDST THESE NUMEROUS SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN STEERING THIS COUNTRY TO GREATER HEIGHTS.

THEME OF MY ADDRESS

MR SPEAKER,

DURING THE PAST FOUR YEARS, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTING A ROBUST DEVELOPMENT AGENDA. IN EVERY DEVELOPMENT AGENDA, THERE ARE ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES.

MR SPEAKER,

EARLIER ON, I MENTIONED THESE CHALLENGES THAT ARE AS A RESULT OF CLIMATE CHANGE. BUT WE ALSO HAVE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES SUCH AS FALLING COMMODITY PRICES ON THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET, AND MOST RECENTLY, THE DISRUPTION ON LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

MR SPEAKER,

DESPITE THE ABOVE CHALLENGES, I AM ENCOURAGED THAT THE ZAMBIAN PEOPLE HAVE BEEN RESILIENT. THEY WAKE UP EVERY MORNING AND FACE EACH DAY WITH COURAGE, DIGNITY AND PURPOSE. THEY TRY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR FAMILIES. THEY HAVE NOT GIVEN UP. I SALUTE ALL ZAMBIANS FOR THE RESILIENCE.

MR SPEAKER,

WE WILL NOT LET OUR PEOPLE DOWN. LET ME REITERATE THIS FACT. WE WILL NOT LET OUR PEOPLE DOWN.

MR SPEAKER,

THE THEME FOR MY ADDRESS TODAY, THEREFORE, IS: **DEDICATION, RESILIENCE AND INNOVATION: PURSUING ECONOMIC RECOVERY FOR THE ZAMBIA WE WANT.**

MR SPEAKER,

PURSUING ECONOMIC RECOVERY ***FOR THE ZAMBIA WE WANT*** IS THE NUMBER ONE GOAL OF MY GOVERNMENT BECAUSE SO MUCH DEPENDS ON THE ECONOMY.

OUR MINDSET SHOULD, THEREFORE, BE ATTUNED TO BUILDING A ZAMBIA THAT IS RESILIENT TO SHOCKS; A ZAMBIA THAT IS OPEN TO NEW IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES; A ZAMBIA THAT IS LOOKING INWARDS FOR LOCAL SOLUTIONS.

MR SPEAKER,

OUR COUNTRY NEEDS THE DEDICATION OF ALL OF US TO OVERCOME THE SETBACKS WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED IN THE RECENT PAST. THE DEDICATION TO HOLD ON TO HOPE AND NOT GIVE IN TO DESPAIR. WE SHOULD NOT GIVE UP.

AS THE LATE EVANGELIST BILLY GRAHAM SAID:

OUR WORLD TODAY SO DESPERATELY HUNGERS FOR HOPE, YET UNCOUNTED PEOPLE HAVE ALMOST GIVEN UP. THERE IS DISPAIR AND HOPELESSNESS ON EVERY HAND. LET US BE FAITHFUL IN PROCLAIMING THE HOPE THAT IS IN JESUS.

MR SPEAKER,

AS A PEOPLE, WE WILL NOT GIVE UP. WE WILL REMAIN DEDICATED TO OVERCOMING OUR CURRENT DIFFICULTIES. WE WILL KEEP THE FAITH AND BELIEVE IN OUR FUTURE. TOGETHER, WE CAN DO IT, AND WE WILL DO IT.

MR SPEAKER,

WE NEED THE DEDICATION OF ALL THOSE IN OUR HEALTHCARE FACILITIES. WE NEED THE DEDICATION OF OUR FARMERS, OUR FACTORY AND SHOP WORKERS, THOSE IN CONSTRUCTION, MINING, FINANCE AND THE LARGER SERVICE INDUSTRY. WE NEED THE DEDICATION OF TEACHERS TO KEEP OUR SCHOOLS RUNNING AND SAFE, THE DEDICATION OF OUR MARKET STALL OWNERS AS WELL AS CUSTOMERS TO KEEP OUR MARKETS SAFE, CLEAN AND CONDUCIVE FOR BUSINESS.

WE ALL NEED TO WORK HARD IN ORDER TO KEEP THE WHEELS OF OUR ECONOMY TURNING. NOW IS THE TIME TO GIVE OUR VERY BEST FOR MOTHER ZAMBIA.

MR SPEAKER,

DEDICATION ALONE MAY NOT BE ENOUGH. WE ALSO NEED RESILIENCE. WE NEED TO BUILD RESILIENCE IN ALL OUR SYSTEMS; RESILIENCE IN ALL OUR BUSINESSES; RESILIENCE IN ALL SECTORS OF OUR ECONOMY AND, INDEED, THE RESILIENCE OF OUR PEOPLE.

MR SPEAKER,

TO BE TRULY RESILIENT, WE HAVE TO INVEST IN BUILDING CAPACITIES THAT WILL ENABLE US TO COPE AND RECOVER QUICKLY IN THE FACE OF DIFFICULTIES. IT ALSO MEANS INVESTING MORE IN CLIMATE RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROMOTING CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE. WE ALSO HAVE TO STRENGTHEN OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS THAT WILL HELP US RECOVER AND COPE WHEN CONFRONTED WITH PANDEMICS.

WITH REGARD TO THE ECONOMY, WE HAVE TO DO MORE IN DIVERSIFICATION, VALUE ADDITION, EXPANDING OUR EXPORT BASE, AND FINDING LOCAL BUSINESS SOLUTIONS. LET US ACT NOW AND SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN VARIOUS SECTORS OF OUR ECONOMY.

MR SPEAKER,

ALL THESE EFFORTS MAY NOT COUNT IN THE ABSENCE OF THE RESILIENCE OF OUR PEOPLE. OUR PEOPLE AND OUR BUSINESSES HAVE SHOWN TREMENDOUS RESILIENCE AND CAPACITY TO REMAIN STEADFAST AND TO BOUNCE BACK FROM DIFFICULT SITUATIONS. WE HAVE DONE IT BEFORE AND WE WILL CERTAINLY DO IT AGAIN.

MR SPEAKER,

TO TURN AROUND OUR ECONOMY, WE ALSO NEED TO BE INNOVATIVE. WE MUST LOOK BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL WAYS OF DOING THINGS AND EMBRACE NEW WAYS OF DOING THINGS AND FIND NEW SOLUTIONS TO EXISTING AND EMERGING CHALLENGES. I AM DELIGHTED THAT MOST SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY HAVE RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO CALLS FOR INNOVATIONS THAT ARE KEEPING THE WHEELS OF THE ECONOMY RUNNING.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE CORPORATE WORLD AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE INTRODUCED VARIOUS ONLINE PLATFORMS AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

THE EDUCATION SECTOR HAS ALSO EMBRACED INNOVATIVE WAYS OF REACHING OUT TO THE LEARNERS WHEN PHYSICAL CONTACT IN CLASSROOM SITUATIONS WAS NOT ADVISABLE. THE SAME CAN BE SAID OF BUSINESS REGULATORS, PENSION HOUSES AND MANY GOVERNMENT SERVICES. THIS IS THE WAY TO GO UNDER THE 'NEW NORMAL'.

OUR MACROECONOMIC SITUATION

MR SPEAKER,

DURING THE PERIOD 2016 TO 2019, OUR ECONOMY REMAINED RESILIENT, REGISTERING POSITIVE GROWTH AVERAGING **3.2** PERCENT. IN 2020, HOWEVER, THE ECONOMIC GROWTH RATE IS PROJECTED TO DECLINE TO NEGATIVE **4.2** PERCENT. THIS IS NOT UNIQUE TO OUR COUNTRY.

THE GLOBAL ECONOMY IS PROJECTED TO GROW AT NEGATIVE **4.9** PERCENT BY THE END OF 2020 COMPARED TO THE POSITIVE GROWTH RATE OF **3.2** PERCENT REGISTERED IN 2019.

THIS IS MAINLY ATTRIBUTED TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC WHICH HAS LED TO DISRUPTIONS IN THE SUPPLY AND VALUE CHAINS, FALL IN INTERNATIONAL COMMODITY PRICES, REDUCED EXPORTS, LOW INVESTMENTS, AND LIQUIDITY CONSTRAINTS.

MR SPEAKER,

THE IMPACT OF THE SLOWDOWN IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY HAS BEEN IMMENSE ON OUR ECONOMY. THE COUNTRY IS EXPORTING LESS OF BOTH TRADITIONAL AND NON-TRADITIONAL COMMODITIES. THIS HAS LED TO REDUCED REVENUES FOR GOVERNMENT AND PROFITS FOR BUSINESSES, AS WELL, AS A REDUCTION IN INVESTMENT AND JOB CREATION.

MR SPEAKER,

TO STIMULATE ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE SHORT-TERM, PARTICULARLY, FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, GOVERNMENT HAS HAD TO IMPLEMENT TAX RELIEF MEASURES. THESE MEASURES HAVE BEEN NECESSARY TO KEEP THE PRIVATE SECTOR AFLOAT AND PROTECT JOBS.

BECAUSE OF THE TAX RELIEF MEASURES, DOMESTIC REVENUES IN 2020 ARE NOW PROJECTED TO DECLINE BY **17.8** PERCENT, SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTING PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION. IN ADDITION, EXPENDITURE FOR MOST PROGRAMMES HAS BEEN CONSTRAINED TO ACCOMMODATE UNFORESEEN HEALTH EXPENDITURES.

TO FURTHER IMPROVE LIQUIDITY IN THE ECONOMY AND MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19, GOVERNMENT HAS INTRODUCED A **K10** BILLION MEDIUM-TERM REFINANCING FACILITY TO SUPPORT VARIOUS PLAYERS IN THE ECONOMY.

THE OBJECTIVE HAS BEEN TO STRENGTHEN FINANCIAL SECTOR RESILIENCE AS WELL AS PROMOTE PRIVATE SECTOR LED ECONOMIC GROWTH. FURTHERMORE, GOVERNMENT HAS ISSUED THE **K8** BILLION COVID-19 BOND AS AN ECONOMIC STIMULUS PACKAGE.

TO SUPPORT THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND IMPROVE LIQUIDITY IN THE ECONOMY, GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO PRIORITISE THE DISMANTLING OF DOMESTIC ARREARS SUCH AS THOSE OWED TO SUPPLIERS AND PENSIONERS.

MR SPEAKER,

DESPITE THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES THAT WE ARE EXPERIENCING, A TOTAL OF **K1.9** BILLION HAS SO FAR BEEN RELEASED AGAINST THE 2020 BUDGET OF **K2.1** BILLION. MY GOVERNMENT REMAINS COMMITTED TO DISMANTLING ALL OUTSTANDING DOMESTIC ARREARS.

MR SPEAKER,

I WISH TO ASSURE THIS AUGUST HOUSE THAT MY GOVERNMENT REMAINS RESOLUTE IN IMPLEMENTING ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAMMES AIMED AT ACHIEVING A STABLE MACROECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT, AND FAVOURABLE PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT.

MR SPEAKER,

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT A REBOUND OF OUR ECONOMY IS PROJECTED IN 2021 SUBJECT TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC BEING CONTAINED.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPPORTIVE POLICY MEASURES WILL FURTHER STIMULATE THE ECONOMY AND PUT US ON A SOLID PATH TO RECOVERY.

MR SPEAKER,

THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF FINANCE WILL SOON PRESENT TO THIS AUGUST HOUSE THE 2021 NATIONAL BUDGET. THE BUDGET WILL OUTLINE SPECIFIC MEASURES TO FOSTER ECONOMIC RECOVERY FOR ***THE ZAMBIA WE WANT***. LET ME URGE THE HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THIS AUGUST HOUSE TO INTERROGATE, DEBATE AND ULTIMATELY SUPPORT THE 2021 NATIONAL BUDGET.

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND JOB CREATION

MR SPEAKER,

MY GOVERNMENT HAS IDENTIFIED ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND JOB CREATION AS THE KEY PILLAR TO SUPPORT ZAMBIA'S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.

IN THIS REGARD, A NUMBER OF INTERVENTIONS HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN THE SECTORS IDENTIFIED AS KEY DRIVERS AND ENABLERS FOR ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION, AND JOB CREATION.

MR SPEAKER,

IN 2016, I ANNOUNCED TO THIS AUGUST HOUSE THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD PRIORITISE INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT FOR OUR ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AGENDA. I AM PLEASED TO INFORM THE HOUSE THAT THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR HAS PERFORMED WELL.

THE PRODUCTION OF MAJOR CROPS HAS BEEN INCREASING OVER THE YEARS. FOR INSTANCE, MAIZE PRODUCTION INCREASED FROM **2.8 MILLION** METRIC TONNES IN 2016 TO **3.4 MILLION** METRIC TONNES IN 2020.

MR SPEAKER,

SINCE 2016, MORE OF OUR FARMERS ARE INCREASINGLY TAKING UP THE GROWING OF OTHER CASH CROPS SUCH AS SORGHUM, CASSAVA, RICE, GROUNDNUTS, TOBACCO, SOYA BEANS, MIXED BEANS, IRISH POTATOES, PAPRIKA AND CASHEW NUTS. THIS IS EVIDENCED BY THE AREA BROUGHT UNDER CULTIVATION FOR THESE CROPS THAT INCREASED FROM **1 MILLION** HECTARES IN 2016 TO MORE THAN **1.2 MILLION** HECTARES IN 2019.

MR SPEAKER,

LET ME COMMEND OUR FARMERS FOR DIVERSIFYING FROM GROWING MAIZE TO OTHER HIGH VALUE CROPS. THIS HAS NOT ONLY TRANSLATED INTO IMPROVED NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY BUT ALSO INCREASED INCOMES FOR OUR FARMERS AND OTHER PLAYERS IN THE AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS.

MR SPEAKER,

THIS SUCCESS STORY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR OUR HARDWORKING FARMERS, AND A FAVOURABLE POLICY ENVIRONMENT.

IT IS BEFITTING THAT WE THANK OUR FARMERS FOR A JOB WELL DONE. MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE THANK GOD THE ALMIGHTY FOR HIS CONTINUED BLESSINGS UPON THIS NATION.

MR SPEAKER,

THE COUNTRY HAS CONTINUED TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN SEED PRODUCTION FOR MAIZE, SOYA BEANS, BEANS, GROUNDNUTS, COTTON, RICE, WHEAT, AND CASHEW NUTS, AMONG OTHERS. SEED PRODUCTION INCREASED FROM **97,000** METRIC TONNES IN 2016 TO **129,000** METRIC TONNES IN 2020.

WE HAVE TURNED OUR FORTUNES AROUND FROM BEING IMPORTERS OF MAIZE SEED TO NET EXPORTERS. DURING THE PERIOD 2016 TO 2020, THE COUNTRY EXPORTED **108,000** METRIC TONNES OF MAIZE SEED TO COUNTRIES IN THE EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGIONS.

MR SPEAKER,

OVER THE PERIOD OF FOUR YEARS, THE COUNTRY HAS PRODUCED **FORTY-FOUR** SEED VARIETIES, GIVING OUR FARMERS OPTIONS OF SEEDS TO USE IN DIFFERENT CLIMATIC AND SOIL CONDITIONS.

I, THEREFORE, COMMEND THE SEED INDUSTRY IN ZAMBIA FOR RESPONDING POSITIVELY TO MYGOVERNMENT'S AGRICULTURE SECTOR POLICIES, AND FOR BEING EXEMPLARY TOWARDS ACHIEVING A SELF-SUFFICIENT, AND EXPORT-ORIENTED AGRICULTURE SECTOR.

MR SPEAKER,

DESPITE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, GOVERNMENT WILL ENSURE THAT THERE IS NO DISRUPTION IN AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION, NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS. THE MARKETING OF FARMERS' PRODUCE WILL GO ON AS USUAL. ALL AGRICULTURAL INPUTS SUCH AS FERTILISER, SEED AND AGRO-CHEMICALS WILL REACH OUR FARMERS BEFORE THE ONSET OF THE RAINY SEASON AS DEMONSTRATED ON WEDNESDAY THIS WEEK WHEN I FLAGGED OFF THE 2020/2021 INPUT DISTRIBUTION EXERCISE.

GOVERNMENT IS ALSO DETERMINED TO SEE THAT THE COUNTRY'S NATIONAL STRATEGIC FOOD RESERVE IS DOUBLED FROM **500,000** METRIC TONNES TO **ONE MILLION** METRIC TONNES. WITH THESE MEASURES IN PLACE, THE COUNTRY IS ASSURED OF BEING FOOD SECURE.

MR SPEAKER,

THE COUNTRY RECORDED AN INCREASE IN FISH PRODUCTION FROM **115,000** METRIC TONNES IN 2016 TO **127,000** METRIC TONNES IN 2019.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ZAMBIA AQUACULTURE ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT WORTH **51** MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS IS PROGRESSING WELL. THIS PROJECT IS AIMED AT PROMOTING FISH PRODUCTION, PROCESSING AND MARKETING.

THE PROJECT IS CONTRIBUTING TO RURAL INDUSTRIALISATION, ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND JOB CREATION IN ALL THE TEN PROVINCES, AS WELL AS, BUILDING NECESSARY CAPACITIES IN YOUTHS WHO WANT TO VENTURE INTO AQUACULTURE AS A BUSINESS.

MR SPEAKER,

I AM HAPPY TO INFORM THIS AUGUST HOUSE AND THE NATION AT LARGE THAT **4,119** PEOPLE OUT OF A TARGET OF **12,000**, HAVE SO FAR BENEFITED FROM THE PROJECT, OUT OF WHICH **1,783** ARE YOUTH. A LOT MORE OPPORTUNITIES, THEREFORE, STILL EXIST IN THE AQUACULTURE SUB-SECTOR.

MR SPEAKER,

THE LIVESTOCK SUBSECTOR IS IMPORTANT IN PURSUING ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND JOB CREATION. THE SUBSECTOR HAS, HOWEVER, BEEN ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE DISEASE BURDEN, AS WELL AS, INADEQUATE PASTURE AND FORAGE. WE NEED TO DO MORE TO HELP OUR FARMERS OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES. THAT IS WHY THE THEME OF MY SPEECH TODAY BECKONS US TO BE INNOVATIVE AND RESILIENT.

TO GROW THE LIVESTOCK SUBSECTOR, GOVERNMENT WILL PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO LIVESTOCK RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, PROVISION OF LIVESTOCK SERVICES, IMPROVED ANIMAL HUSBANDRY, INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND ASSISTING OUR FARMERS TO ACCESS BOTH CAPITAL AND MARKETS. MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE WILL CONTINUE PROMOTING PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN THIS SUBSECTOR.

MR SPEAKER,

WITH THE INTERVENTIONS I HAVE HIGHLIGHTED, I AM CONFIDENT THAT NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY WILL BE GUARANTEED AND THE LIVELIHOOD OF OUR FARMERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IN RURAL AREAS, WILL BE IMPROVED.

MR SPEAKER,

THE MINING SECTOR REMAINS AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR ECONOMY. ON AVERAGE, THE MINING SECTOR ACCOUNTED FOR **14** PERCENT OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT AND **74.4** PERCENT OF TOTAL EXPORT EARNINGS DURING THE PERIOD 2016 TO 2019. DURING THE SAME PERIOD, COPPER PRODUCTION AVERAGED **805,000** METRIC TONNES.

MY GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE PROMOTING DIVERSIFICATION WITHIN THE MINING SECTOR BY EXPLOITING OTHER MINERALS IN ADDITION TO COPPER.

MR SPEAKER,

NICKEL PRODUCTION ALSO INCREASED FROM **817** METRIC TONNES IN 2019 TO **3,394** METRIC TONNES OVER THE SAME PERIOD IN 2020. A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE OF **77.6** PERCENT WAS ALSO RECORDED IN MANGANESE PRODUCTION. IT INCREASED FROM **10,431** METRIC TONNES IN 2019 TO **18,530** METRIC TONNES IN 2020.

OTHER MINERALS SUCH AS GOLD, COAL, COBALT AND EMERALD, HOWEVER, RECORDED REDUCED PRODUCTION DURING THE SAME PERIOD.

THE CONTRIBUTING FACTORS CONTINUED TO BE LOW ORE GRADE, OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES AND DEPLETING ORE RESERVES AT OLD MINES.

MR SPEAKER,

IN MY LAST ADDRESS TO THIS HOUSE IN MARCH, 2020, I INFORMED THE NATION THAT GOVERNMENT HAD DECLARED GOLD AS A STRATEGIC MINERAL AND ESTABLISHED THE ZAMBIA GOLD COMPANY LIMITED TO SPEARHEAD GOLD MINING ACTIVITIES IN THE COUNTRY. NOTWITHSTANDING THE LOW LEVELS OF PRODUCTION, GOLD MINING REMAINS STRATEGIC TO THE ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND JOB CREATION AGENDA.

MR SPEAKER,

I WISH TO REPORT THAT THE ZAMBIA GOLD COMPANY LIMITED HAS SINCE BEGAN PURCHASING GOLD FROM ARTISANAL AND SMALL-SCALE MINERS IN RUFUNSA, VUBWI, MUMBWA AND LUANO DISTRICTS. THE COMPANY ALSO COMMENCED GOLD MINING OPERATIONS IN KASENSELI AREA IN MWINILUNGA DISTRICT IN JUNE, 2020.

MR SPEAKER,

GOLD MINING, IF WELL HARNESSSED, WILL SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF OUR PEOPLE. I, THEREFORE, ENCOURAGE MORE OF OUR PEOPLE TO ENGAGE IN GOLD MINING AND PRODUCTION, AS THIS IS CRITICAL FOR WEALTH AND JOB CREATION.

I INVITE THE YOUTH TO FORM COOPERATIVES THROUGH WHICH THEY WILL BE EMPOWERED TO PARTICIPATE IN GOLD MINING ACTIVITIES. SO FAR, **13** COOPERATIVES IN RUFUNSA AND PETAUKE DISTRICTS HAVE BEEN CREATED AND SUPPORTED TO INCREASE PRODUCTION.

AS WE LOOK AHEAD, GOVERNMENT WILL ENHANCE THE GENERATION AND PROVISION OF GEOLOGICAL INFORMATION. IN ADDITION, GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO DO MORE TO PROMOTE MINERAL EXPLORATION, PRODUCTION AND VALUE ADDITION IN THE MINING SECTOR. WE WILL ALSO ENSURE THAT COMMUNITIES IN MINERAL RESERVE AREAS BENEFIT FROM THESE RESOURCES THROUGH ORGANISED MINING AND TRADE. WE ARE DETERMINED TO BRING ORDER TO GOLD MINING SO THAT MORE DIVIDENDS ACCRUE TO OUR PEOPLE AND THE ECONOMY.

MR SPEAKER,

TOURISM REMAINS ONE OF THE KEY SECTORS IN OUR EFFORTS TO DIVERSIFY THE ECONOMY AND CREATE JOBS FOR OUR PEOPLE. DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW, THE TOURISM SECTOR CONTRIBUTED AN AVERAGE OF **2.5** PERCENT TO THE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT. THE SECTOR, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN THE MOST AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC DUE TO ITS OVER-RELIANCE ON FOREIGN TOURISTS. IN THE FIRST HALF OF THIS YEAR, THE WILDLIFE SUBSECTOR ALONE LOST AN ESTIMATED **90** MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS AND **7,072** JOBS.

CURRENT PROJECTIONS ARE THAT THE SECTOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT WILL BE LESS THAN ONE PERCENT THIS YEAR.

MR SPEAKER,

TO REVERSE THE NEGATIVE TREND, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT ALL THE PLAYERS IN THE TOURISM SECTOR EMBRACE INNOVATION IN ORDER TO SUSTAIN THEIR BUSINESSES. NOW IS THE TIME FOR THE SECTOR TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER TAPPING INTO THE POTENTIAL OF LOCAL TOURISM. IN THE 'NEW NORMAL' AND BEYOND, LET US MAKE IT EASY FOR OUR PEOPLE, INCLUDING PUBLIC SERVANTS, TO TAKE HOLIDAYS IN OUR TOURIST LOCATIONS.

MR SPEAKER,

GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ENERGY SECTOR IN FACILITATING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES ACROSS DIFFERENT SECTORS. IN 2016, WE UNDERTOOK TO INCREASE THE COUNTRY'S ELECTRICITY GENERATION CAPACITY AND ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY.

MR SPEAKER,

I AM GLAD TO REPORT THAT THE ELECTRICITY GENERATION CAPACITY INCREASED FROM **2,800** MEGAWATTS IN 2016 TO **3000** MEGAWATTS IN 2020. THIS WAS A RESULT OF AN ADDITION OF **160** MEGAWATTS TO THE EXISTING CAPACITY FROM HYDRO, THERMAL AND SOLAR ENERGY SOURCES.

THESE ARE THE NDOLA ENERGY POWER PLANT UPGRADE, THE MUSONDA FALLS POWER STATION UPGRADE, AND THE BANGWEULU, NGONYE AND COPPERBELT ENERGY CORPORATION SOLAR PLANTS.

MR SPEAKER,

WHILE THE ELECTRICITY GENERATION CAPACITY HAS INCREASED, THE ACTUAL ELECTRICITY GENERATION HAS BEEN FLUCTUATING DUE TO DROUGHT THAT HAS AFFECTED MOST OF THE HYDRO POWER STATIONS. THIS IS HAPPENING AT THE TIME WHEN THE DEMAND FOR ELECTRICITY HAS BEEN STEADILY INCREASING.

MR SPEAKER,

TO ADDRESS THIS RISING DEMAND, I AM HAPPY TO REPORT THAT AN ADDITIONAL **750** MEGAWATTS OF ELECTRICITY IS EXPECTED TO COME ON BOARD BY THE END OF THE YEAR AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE KAFUE GORGE LOWER POWER STATION AND THE CHUNGA SOLAR POWER PROJECT IN KAFUE NATIONAL PARK.

THE COMING ON BOARD OF THE KAFUE GORGE LOWER POWER STATION WILL MARK A MAJOR MILESTONE IN ELECTRICITY GENERATION IN OUR COUNTRY SINCE THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE KARIBA AND KAFUE GORGE POWER STATIONS MANY YEARS AGO.

MR SPEAKER,

LOADSHEDDING CONTINUES TO HAUNT US AND AFFECT OUR LIVELIHOODS. I AM HAPPY TO REPORT THAT LOADSHEDDING SHALL BE A THING OF THE PAST ONCE I COMMISSION THE KAFUE GORGE LOWER POWER STATION WHICH WILL PRODUCE 750 MEGAWATTS.

MR SPEAKER,

OUR CURRENT ELECTRICITY DEFICIT IS 810 MEGAWATTS. THEREFORE, THE KAFUE GORGE LOWER POWER STATION, AND OTHER HYDRO-POWER STATIONS THAT ARE COMING INTO BEING, INCLUDING SOLAR POWER STATIONS WILL CERTAINLY WIPE OUT THIS POWER DEFICIT.

MR SPEAKER,

I WISH TO THANK OUR PEOPLE FOR THE UNDERSTANDING AND THE RESILIENCE THEY HAVE SHOWN DURING THIS DIFFICULT PERIOD. I CAN ASSURE THE ZAMBIAN PEOPLE THAT MY GOVERNMENT HAS INVESTED ENOUGH IN ELECTRICITY GENERATION TO TURN THE TIDE AROUND.

MR SPEAKER,

INCREASING THE COUNTRY'S CAPACITY TO TRADE, PARTICULARLY, IN EXPORTS OF A WIDE VARIETY OF GOODS BEYOND OUR TRADITIONAL PRODUCTS OF COPPER AND COBALT, HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT GOAL OF MY GOVERNMENT.

MR SPEAKER,

IT IS MY ADMINISTRATION'S DESIRE TO PITCH ZAMBIA AS A COMPETITIVE COUNTRY BY INCREASING NON-TRADITIONAL EXPORTS TO REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS AS WELL AS IMPROVING DOMESTIC TRADE.

IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT WE HAVE CONTINUED PROMOTING EXPORTS, AND PROVIDING THE NECESSARY ENVIRONMENT FOR EXPORT DIVERSIFICATION.

MR SPEAKER,

A NOTABLE INTERVENTION IS THE LAUNCH OF THE ZAMBIA TRADE INFORMATION PORTAL THAT PROVIDES ALL THE NECESSARY TRADE INFORMATION TO FACILITATE TRADERS' COMPLIANCE WITH OUR IMPORT, EXPORT AND TRANSIT REQUIREMENTS.

MR SPEAKER,

WHILE THE AVERAGE TRADE BALANCE BETWEEN 2016 AND 2018 WAS NEGATIVE, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT IN 2019 THE COUNTRY REGISTERED A POSITIVE TRADE BALANCE. THIS PUTS THE COUNTRY ON THE PATH OF ECONOMIC RECOVERY.

TO CONTINUE ON THIS PATH, WE NEED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE WIDER MARKET IN THE REGION, SUCH AS COMESA, AND ACROSS THE GLOBE. WE NEED TO CONSOLIDATE OUR POSITION AND PARTICIPATE IN THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA.

WE MUST ALSO CONTINUOUSLY INNOVATE AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF OUR PRODUCTS TO COMPETE FAVOURABLY.

MR SPEAKER,

THE DOMESTIC MARKET ALSO OFFERS NUMEROUS OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL PRODUCTS. TO THIS EFFECT, MY GOVERNMENT IS PROMOTING LOCAL CONTENT ACROSS ALL MANUFACTURING AND TRADING ACTIVITIES.

I, THEREFORE, URGE ALL CITIZENS TO CONTINUE BUYING AND CONSUMING LOCALLY PRODUCED GOODS. THIS WILL CREATE AND RETAIN JOBS WITHIN OUR ECONOMY.

WHEN WE STRENGTHEN OUR LOCAL MANUFACTURING SECTOR AND ENCOURAGE BUYING ZAMBIAN PRODUCTS, WE SAVE THE MUCH NEEDED FOREIGN CURRENCY THAT IS, OTHERWISE, USED TO IMPORT FOREIGN PRODUCTS.

MR SPEAKER,

BUYING ZAMBIAN IS ANOTHER WAY OF INVESTING IN OUR LOCAL INDUSTRIES AS WELL AS STRENGTHENING OUR CURRENCY. THE MORE MONEY WE HAVE AS A COUNTRY, THE MORE OUR PEOPLE BENEFIT THROUGH THE JOBS THAT ARE CREATED AND THE PUBLIC SERVICES WE ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE.

NOTWITHSTANDING THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON TRADE, WE MUST BE INNOVATIVE UNDER THIS SITUATION. WE MUST STRENGTHEN DOMESTIC VALUE CHAINS, THEREBY INCREASE TRADE OF LOCALLY PRODUCED AGRICULTURAL AND NON-AGRICULTURAL GOODS.

MR SPEAKER,

IN ONE OF MY ADDRESSES TO THE NATION ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, I DIRECTED THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE TO ENSURE CHAIN STORES BOUGHT LOCAL PRODUCE FROM OUR FARMERS RATHER THAN IMPORTING THEM. I WILL SOON BE VISITING SOME OF THE CHAIN STORES TO SEE WHETHER MY DIRECTIVE IS BEING FOLLOWED.

MR SPEAKER,

TO PROMOTE THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTING PROGRAMMES SUCH AS MULTI-FACILITY ECONOMIC ZONES AS WELL AS DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT PROMOTION. THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR CONSEQUENTLY GREW BY AN AVERAGE OF **3.2 PERCENT** BETWEEN 2016 AND 2019, THE MAIN GROWTH DRIVERS BEING TEXTILES, LEATHER, AND NON-METALLIC MINERAL PRODUCTS. OTHERS INCLUDED BASE METALS, CHEMICALS, RUBBER AND PLASTIC PRODUCTS AS WELL AS FOOD, BEVERAGES AND TOBACCO SUB-SECTORS.

TO FURTHER DRIVE INDUSTRIAL GROWTH, WE HAVE CONTINUED PROMOTING VALUE CHAINS THROUGH THE CORE VENTURE INVESTMENT MODEL WHERE LARGE INVESTORS ARE PROVIDING A READY MARKET FOR SMALL-SCALE FARMERS. A GOOD EXAMPLE IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CASSAVA VALUE CHAIN WHERE OVER **6,000** SMALL-SCALE FARMERS HAVE BEEN LINKED TO LARGE COMPANIES SUCH AS ZAMBIAN BREWERIES PLC.

MR SPEAKER,

IN MARCH THIS YEAR, I ORDERED THE CLOSURE OF BARS, TARVENS, AND NIGHT CLUBS, AMONG OTHER OUTLETS, TO COMBAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. WHILE OTHER OUTLETS HAVE SINCE REOPENED UNDER PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINES, BARS, TARVENS AND NIGHTCLUBS HAVE NOT. THIS IS BECAUSE OF THE DANGER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC POSES TO THESE OUTLETS. I AM COGNISANT OF THE SUFFERING THAT OWNERS OF BARS, TARVENS, AND NIGHTCLUBS HAVE EXPERIENCED SINCE THE CLOSURE. I AM AWARE OF THE CONSEQUENT SUFFERING OF THEIR EMPLOYEES, AND RELATED BUSINESSES.THE EMPLOYERS HAVE STRUGGLED TO PAY SALARIES AND TO MAINTAIN THEM. THE EMPLOYEES, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE BARELY SURVIVED AND MANY OF THEM HAVE BECOME DESTITUTE. I KNOW THEY HAVE STRUGGLED TO MAKE ENDS MEET AND THEIR LIVELIHOODS ARE IN DISARRAY.

MR SPEAKER,

I, THEREFORE, ANNOUNCE THE PARTIAL REOPENING OF THESE OUTLETS FROM FRIDAYS TO SUNDAYS WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT, BUT WITH SERIOUS CAUTION THAT ALL PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINES ARE STRICTLY ADHERED TO. THESE OUTLETS SHALL OPERATE FROM 18:00 HOURS TO 23:00 HOURS. THIS IS BEING DONE ON A PILOT BASIS. SHOULD THERE BE ANY FLOUTING OF THESE PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINES, I WILL BE LEFT WITH NO OPTION BUT TO CLOSE THEM AGAIN.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT PATRONS ADHERE TO THESE PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINES SUCH AS MASKING, SOCIAL DISTANCING, AND SANITISING IN ORDER TO PROTECT THEMSELVES, THEIR NEIGHBOURS, AND THE PUBLIC.

I, THEREFORE, DIRECT THE MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS, AND THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH TO ENSURE BAR, TARVEN AND NIGHTCLUB OWNERS AND PATRONS STRICTLY OBSERVE THE OPENING DAYS AND HOURS, AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH REGULATIONS GUIDELINES AND CERTIFICATIONS.

MR SPEAKER,

INDUSTRIAL YARDS PROVIDE FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE COUNTRY TO PURSUE JOB CREATION, INDUSTRIALISATION AND ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION. I AM HAPPY TO REPORT THAT SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRIAL YARDS.

CONSTRUCTION OF INDUSTRIAL YARDS HAS BEEN COMPLETED IN KASAMA, CHIPATA, AND MONGU.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF INDUSTRIAL YARDS IN NDOLA, SOLWEZI AND KITWE IS AT **90** PERCENT, AND AT **60** PERCENT IN KAFUE DISTRICT. ONCE OPERATIONAL, THE INDUSTRIAL YARDS WILL HOST **300** SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES AND CREATE AT LEAST **4,000** JOBS. THE ENTERPRISES WILL BE SUPPORTED WITH EQUIPMENT TO ENGAGE IN VARIOUS MANUFACTURING ACTIVITIES SUCH AS METAL FABRICATION, CARPENTRY, GEMSTONE AND AGRO PROCESSING.

MR SPEAKER,

THE FACE OF THIS COUNTRY HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED DUE TO THE AMBITIOUS TRANSFORMATION DEVELOPMENT AGENDA UNDERTAKEN BY THE PATRIOTIC FRONT GOVERNMENT FROM 2011. THE PRISTINE ROAD NETWORKS, THE STATE OF THE ART BRIDGES, THE DELIGHTFUL HOSPITALS, SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES HAVE NOT ONLY MADE LIFE EASY FOR OUR PEOPLE, THEY HAVE ADDED BEAUTY TO OUR CITIES AND TOWNS.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IS A CATALYST TO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PRODUCTIVITY. AS SUCH, WE HAVE CONSTRUCTED AND REHABILITATED ROADS, AIRPORTS AS WELL AS WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION INFRASTRUCTURE. WE HAVE ALSO EMBARKED ON ROBUST CONSTRUCTION OF SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES.

IN THE HEALTH SECTOR, WE HAVE BUILT SPECIALISED HOSPITALS, CLINICS AND HEALTH POSTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. THIS IS WHAT MY ADMINISTRATION MEANS BY TAKING DEVELOPMENT TO ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY AND CLOSER TO OUR PEOPLE.

OUR ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE IS OPENING UP THE COUNTRY BY CONNECTING THE OUTLYING AREAS, INCLUDING KEY TOURISM ATTRACTIONS IN ALL THE **10** PROVINCES. THE INFRASTRUCTURE HAS ALSO LINKED OUR COUNTRY TO ALL THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES, RESULTING IN EASY ACCESSIBILITY AND THE CREATION OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR PEOPLE, INCLUDING JOBS.

FURTHER, THE ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE IS OPENING UP OUR TOWNS AND CITIES AND IMPROVING THE FLOW OF TRAFFIC.

NOWADAYS, OUR PEOPLE SPEND LESS TIME ON THE ROAD. THEY HAVE MORE CHOICES OF ROUTES TO USE AND ARE SPENDING LESS MONEY ON THE MAINTENANCE OF THEIR VEHICLES AND FUEL. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY ARE ABLE TO ATTEND TO MORE PRODUCTIVE VENTURES IN A SINGLE DAY. OUR FARMERS ARE NOW TRANSPORTING THEIR PRODUCE TO MARKETS EASILY, CHEAPLY AND QUICKLY.

MR SPEAKER,

THE UPGRADING OF THE KENNETH KAUNDA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT INTO AN ULTRA-MODERN FACILITY NOW STANDS AT **90** PERCENT COMPARED TO **84** PERCENT REPORTED LAST YEAR.

ONCE COMPLETED, THE AIRPORT WILL HAVE THE CAPACITY TO HANDLE TRAFFIC OF **6** MILLION PEOPLE PER ANNUM, UP FROM 2 MILLION PEOPLE PER ANNUM. WITH REGARD TO THE COPPERBELT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, WORKS ARE NOW AT **76** PERCENT COMPARED TO THE **43** PERCENT REPORTED LAST YEAR.

MR SPEAKER,

A RESILIENT NATIONAL ROAD TOLLING PROGRAMME HAS TRANSFORMED ZAMBIA INTO A BEACON OF LEARNING WITHIN A SHORT PERIOD, DRAWING ATTENTION FROM THE REGION AND BEYOND, AS ROAD FUNDS LOOK FOR SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS TO ROAD FINANCING. GOVERNMENT HAS SO FAR ROLLED OUT THE TOLLING PROGRAMME ACROSS THE COUNTRY WITH 34 TOLLING POINTS CONSISTING OF 21 TOLL STATIONS, THREE WEIGHBRIDGES AND 10 PORTS OF ENTRY.

MR SPEAKER,

SINCE INCEPTION, A TOTAL OF K4.8 BILLION HAS BEEN COLLECTED IN TOLL REVENUE. HOWEVER, OWING TO COVID-19, WHICH HAS SEEN A REDUCTION IN TRAFFIC VOLUMES, GOVERNMENT PROJECTS AN END YEAR COLLECTION UNDERPERFORMING.

MR SPEAKER,

GOVERNMENT HAS PUT IN MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE COLLECTION PERFORMANCE WHICH MEASURES ARE EXPECTED TO RESULT IN AN OVERALL TOLL REVENUE COLLECTION OF K1.4 BILLION AGAINST A BUDGETED COLLECTION OF K1.6 BILLION.

POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY REDUCTION

MR SPEAKER,

AS A PRO-POOR GOVERNMENT, WE HAVE CONTINUED TO FIGHT POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY AMONG OUR PEOPLE. IN OUR BID TO REDUCE POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY, THE FOCUS HAS BEEN ON ENHANCING THE WELFARE AND LIVELIHOODS OF THE POOR AND VULNERABLE.

WE ARE ALSO FOCUSING ON BUILDING RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISKS AS WELL AS REDUCING VULNERABILITY ASSOCIATED WITH HIV AND AIDS PREVALENCE. WE HAVE CONTINUED TO DO SO WITH DEDICATION AND DETERMINATION.

I AM HAPPY TO INFORM THE HOUSE THAT THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY HEADCOUNT IN THE COUNTRY HAS REDUCED FROM **50** PERCENT IN 2014 TO **44** PERCENT IN 2018. DURING THIS SAME PERIOD, POVERTY IN RURAL ZAMBIA DECLINED FROM **69** PERCENT TO **59** PERCENT WHILE IN URBAN AREAS, IT DECLINED FROM **25** PERCENT TO **18** PERCENT.

THESE POSITIVE STATISTICS HAVE BEEN RECORDED ON ACCOUNT OF INTERVENTIONS BEING IMPLEMENTED BY MY GOVERNMENT ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

MR SPEAKER,

THESE INTERVENTIONS INCLUDE THE SOCIAL CASH TRANSFER, THE FOOD SECURITY PACK, THE EMERGENCY CASH TRANSFER SCHEME AND THE SUPPORTING WOMEN LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMME. CURRENTLY, APPROXIMATELY **4.2** MILLION PEOPLE, ACROSS THE COUNTRY, ARE BENEFITING FROM THESE SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES.

MR SPEAKER,

WE ARE ALSO MAKING STEADY PROGRESS IN BROADENING SOCIAL SECURITY COVERAGE FOR OUR PEOPLE IN BOTH THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL ECONOMY.

THE CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF WORKERS REGISTERED WITH SOCIAL SECURITY SCHEMES SINCE 2017 IS ABOUT **1.5 MILLION**. I ENCOURAGE MORE OF OUR PEOPLE TO TAKE UP SOCIAL SECURITY COVER TO SECURE THEIR FUTURE AFTER RETIREMENT.

MR SPEAKER,

MY GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES IN ORDER TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WELL-BEING OF ALL ZAMBIANS WITHOUT LEAVING ANYONE BEHIND.

MR SPEAKER,

MY GOVERNMENT IS COGNISANT OF THE NEGATIVE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE LABOUR MARKET.

I, THEREFORE, URGE THE LEADERS AND CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY TO DEVISE STRATEGIES AND INNOVATIONS THAT WILL KEEP BUSINESSES RUNNING. THEY SHOULD DO ALL THEY CAN TO CUSHION THEIR WORKERS AGAINST JOB LOSSES. THE PANDEMIC SHOULD NOT BE USED AS AN EXCUSE TO RETRENCH WORKERS INDISCRIMINATELY. GOVERNMENT STANDS READY TO WORK WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF THE ZAMBIAN INDUSTRY AND WORKERS UNDER THE NEW NORMAL.

REDUCING DEVELOPMENTAL INEQUALITIES

MR SPEAKER,

WE ARE FIRMLY DETERMINED TO TAKE DEVELOPMENT CLOSER TO ALL OUR PEOPLE REGARDLESS OF GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION.

MY GOVERNMENT HAS, THEREFORE, CONTINUED WORKING TOWARDS REDUCING DEVELOPMENTAL INEQUALITIES, WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON ADDRESSING THE RURAL-URBAN DIVIDE AS WELL AS INCOME, AND GENDER INEQUALITIES.

MR SPEAKER,

WE ARE MAKING STEADY PROGRESS IN ENSURING THAT ALL OUR PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY, WATER AND SANITATION.

THE PERCENTAGE OF RURAL HOUSEHOLDS WITH ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY HAS INCREASED FROM **4.4** PERCENT IN 2015 TO **8.1** PERCENT IN 2019.

MR SPEAKER,

AS A RESULT OF THESE ACHIEVEMENTS, OUR PEOPLE ARE NOW ENJOYING THE BENEFITS OF HAVING ELECTRICITY. AFTER YEARS OF DARKNESS, RESIDENTS OF DUNDUMWEZI, CHIBWIKA IN MWINILUNGA, MUNGWI, MPANTA IN SAMFYA, UKWIMI IN PETAUKE, SANDWE, LUEMBE, NTAMBUIN MWINILUNGA, DIMBWE IN KALOMO, AND MANY OTHER RURAL AREAS ACROSS ZAMBIA ARE NOW ENJOYING ELECTRICITY.

MR SPEAKER,

THIS IS WHAT MY GOVERNMENT MEANS WHEN WE SAY ***WITHOUT LEAVING ANYONE BEHIND.***

MR SPEAKER,

THE PERCENTAGE OF RURAL HOUSEHOLDS WITH ACCESS TO SAFE AND CLEAN DRINKING WATER IMPROVED FROM **47** PERCENT IN 2014 TO **58** PERCENT IN 2018. ACCESS TO IMPROVED SANITATION FACILITIES INCREASED FROM **19** PERCENT IN 2014 TO **37** PERCENT IN 2018.

MR SPEAKER,

THE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT UNDERTAKEN BY GOVERNMENT IN THE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR IS BEARING FRUIT. MY GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED CONSTRUCTING AND UPGRADING COMMUNICATION TOWERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. A TOTAL OF **774** TOWERS HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED COMPARED TO **667** LAST YEAR. IN ADDITION, **720** COMMUNICATION TOWERS HAVE BEEN UPGRADED SINCE 2018. THIS REPRESENTS A NETWORK COVERAGE OF **91** PERCENT COMPARED TO **83** PERCENT IN 2018. THE DIGITAL DIVIDE BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL POPULATION HAS SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED.

MOBILE SUBSCRIPTION INCREASED FROM **11.6** MILLION TO **15.8** MILLION IN 2018, WHILE INTERNET SUBSCRIPTION INCREASED FROM **5.2** MILLION IN 2016 TO **9.9** MILLION IN 2018. IN ADDITION, THERE HAS BEEN INCREASED ACCESS TO ANCILLARY SERVICES, THROUGH ELECTRONIC PLATFORMS, BY OUR PEOPLE. THIS HAS CONTRIBUTED TO IMPROVED FINANCIAL INCLUSION.

MR SPEAKER,

MOBILE MONEY SERVICES ARE CREATING JOBS FOR MANY OF OUR PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE YOUTH. THE VOLUMES AND VALUES OF MOBILE MONEY TRANSACTIONS HAVE TREMENDOUSLY INCREASED FROM **103** MILLION TRANSACTIONS VALUED AT **2.8** BILLION KWACHA IN 2016 TO **552** MILLION TRANSACTIONS VALUED AT **49.3** BILLION KWACHA IN 2019.

MR SPEAKER,

THE YOUTH CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO THE COUNTRY'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. TO THIS EFFECT, GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR YOUTH USING A MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH.

I, THEREFORE, APPLAUD ALL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS THAT HAVE JOINED GOVERNMENT IN HELPING OUR YOUTH LIVE A PRODUCTIVE LIFE. AS I SPEAK, WE HAVE MANY EXAMPLES OF YOUTH DISTINGUISHING THEMSELVES AS LEADERS, BE IT IN MINING, AQUACULTURE, BANKING, POLITICS, CIVIL SERVICE, ACADEMIA, MEDIA, AS WELL AS, TRANSPORTATION TO MENTION BUT A FEW. OTHERS ARE LEADING THE WAY IN HONEY PROCESSING, TIMBER PROCESSING AND INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY.

MR SPEAKER,

GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO EMPOWER WOMEN TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN AGRICULTURE. TO THIS END, AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT SUCH AS TRACTORS, SOLAR EGG INCUBATORS, SOLAR DRIP IRRIGATION SETS, HONEY PRESSES AND BEEHIVES HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO WOMEN-LED COOPERATIVES IN **121** CHIEFDOMS. IN ADDITION, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN PROVIDING TRAINING AND SECURING LAND FOR WOMEN-LED COOPERATIVES. SO FAR, **1,943.4** HECTARES HAVE BEEN SECURED AND GIVEN TO THE COOPERATIVES IN EASTERN, NORTHERN AND MUCHINGA PROVINCES.

WE PLAN TO HAVE **28,800** HECTARES COUNTRYWIDE UNDER MECHANISED AGRICULTURE IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE BURDEN OF FARM WORK. MECHANISATION WILL ALSO ASSIST TO INCREASE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND FACILITATE VALUE ADDITION TO AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE.

ENHANCING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

MY GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF OUR CITIZENS AS WELL AS PROVIDING THEM WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO THRIVE AND REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT WE HAVE CONTINUED TO IMPLEMENT INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT ENHANCING ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH, CLEAN AND SAFE DRINKING WATER AS WELL AS ADEQUATE SANITATION.

MR SPEAKER,

THE EDUCATION SECTOR HAS SERIOUSLY BEEN AFFECTED AND IMPACTED NEGATIVELY BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. BUT BEFORE I COMMENT ON THIS CHALLENGE, LET ME STATE THAT GOVERNMENT HAS MADE MANY GAINS IN THE SECTOR SINCE 2016.

MR SPEAKER,

MY GOVERNMENT PRIORITISES UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION AS A CATALYST TO HOLISTIC HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

AS GOVERNMENT, WE PRIDE OURSELVES IN THE REDUCED TEACHER TO PUPIL RATIOS. PREVIOUSLY, ONE TEACHER WAS TEACHING **75** PUPILS PER CLASS AT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL AND **68** PUPILS AT SECONDARY LEVEL. BY 2019, ONE TEACHER WAS HANDLING A CLASS OF **45** PUPILS AT PRIMARY AND **35** AT SECONDARY LEVEL. THIS MEANS THAT OUR TEACHERS ARE NOW ABLE TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO THE LEARNING NEEDS OF EACH PUPIL.

WITH THIS POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT, THE COUNTRY HAS FURTHER RECORDED AN INCREASE IN LITERACY RATES FROM **67.5** PERCENT IN 2014 TO **80** PERCENT IN 2019. FEMALE LITERACY RATES INCREASED FROM **68** PERCENT IN 2014 TO **79** PERCENT IN 2019.

FURTHER, THERE WAS PROGRESS IN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LEVEL. THE ATTENDANCE RATE INCREASED FROM **24** PERCENT IN 2016 TO **29.4** PERCENT IN 2019. THIS SHOWS THAT OUR PEOPLE ARE BEGINNING TO EMBRACE THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND ITS ROLE IN PROMOTING COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT FROM AN EARLY AGE.

MR SPEAKER,

GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO LAYING A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION THAT WILL DRIVE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS COUNTRY. IN THIS REGARD, SPECIAL ATTENTION HAS BEEN GIVEN TO INCREASING THE NUMBER OF LEARNERS IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS.

TO ENSURE CONSISTENCY IN THE BUILDING OF SKILLS AND SHAPING OF COMPETENCIES IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS, GOVERNMENT HAS OPERATIONALISED **52** SCHOOLS SPECIALISED IN THE TEACHING OF THESE SUBJECTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

MR SPEAKER,

I AM GLAD TO REPORT THAT THE PROPORTION OF LEARNERS IN UNIVERSITIES GRADUATING IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS INCREASED FROM **23** PERCENT IN 2016 TO **30** PERCENT IN 2019. THE COUNTRY STANDS TO BENEFIT FROM THIS INTERVENTION. WE WILL HAVE MORE DOCTORS, MORE ENGINEERS, AND MORE DIGITAL WIZARDS. WE ARE CREATING THE MUCH NEEDED CRITICAL MASS OF SCIENTISTS IN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION. THIS IS WHAT THIS COUNTRY NEEDS.

MR SPEAKER,

MY GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS IN THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION. TO THIS EFFECT, **55** PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN REGISTERED AND ACCREDITED. THIS IS THE FRUIT OF THE VISION OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT PARTY TO INCREASE ACCESS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION THROUGH THE LIBERALISATION OF THE PROVISION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE COUNTRY.

MR SPEAKER,

AS MUCH AS WE WELCOME THE INCREASING NUMBER OF UNIVERSITIES IN OUR COUNTRY, WE MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE QUALITY AND RELEVANCE OF THE EDUCATION BEING OFFERED.

MR SPEAKER,

FOLLOWING THE ENACTMENT OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION LOANS AND SCHOLARSHIPS ACT NO. 31 OF 2016, GOVERNMENT COMMENCED THE RECOVERY OF MONEY LOANED TO STUDENTS WHO WERE ON GOVERNMENT BURSARY. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF OUR COUNTRY, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ABLE TO RECOVER THESE MONIES AS A WAY OF BOOSTING CAPACITY TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL LOANS TO DESERVING STUDENTS. AS AT JULY 2020, A TOTAL OF **72.1**MILLION KWACHA WAS PAID BACK SINCE THE EXERCISE BEGAN IN 2016. THIS IS THE WAY TO GO.

I URGE THOSE BENEFICIARIES IN GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT BUT STILL HESITATING TO PAY BACK THE LOANS TO SEE THE WISDOM OF PAYING. THESE STUDENT LOANS ALSO BENEFIT PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND THOSE LIVING WITH ALBINISM. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT GOVERNMENT HAS SECURED SPECIAL QUOTAS FOR THEIR ENROLMENT IN ALL SEVEN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES. IT IS, THEREFORE, AN HONOURABLE ACT TO MAKE SURE THAT THESE, TOO, BENEFIT FROM STUDENT LOANS.

MR SPEAKER,

DESPITE THE GAINS EARLIER MENTIONED, I WOULD BE REMISS IF I DID NOT ADD THAT I AM GREATLY CONCERNED THAT MOST PUPILS AND STUDENTS HAVE ALMOST LOST A FULL ACADEMIC YEAR AFTER SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES WERE CLOSED DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. LIKE I STATED EARLIER, THIS IS A SITUATION NO GOVERNMENT COULD HAVE AVOIDED.

MR SPEAKER,

I AM FULLY AWARE OF THE NEGATIVE IMPACT THE CLOSURE OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS HAS HAD ON PUPILS, STUDENTS, TEACHERS, LECTURERS, PARENTS, SCHOOL OWNERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC. THROUGH INTERACTIONS, OBSERVATIONS, AND REPORTS, I AM DISTURBED BY THE VICES THAT ARE HAPPENING AT COMMUNITY AND HOUSEHOLD LEVELS.

THESE INCLUDE BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE FOLLOWING: TEENAGE PREGNANCES, CHILD MARRIAGES, RAPE, DEFILEMENT, ALCOHOL ABUSE, INCEST, AND OTHER DELINQUENCES. THESE VICES MAY NOT ONLY LEAD TO THESE YOUNG PEOPLE DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL BUT MAY EXPOSE THEM TO HIV/AIDS AND OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES.

MR SPEAKER,

WHILE WE HAVE ENCOURAGED PUPILS AND STUDENTS TO USE VIRTUAL PLATFORMS DURING THIS CHALLENGING PERIOD, WE SHOULD NOT FORGET THAT MANY OF THESE YOUNG PEOPLE COME FROM POOR FAMILIES THAT CANNOT EVEN AFFORD TO ACCESS THESE DIGITAL PLATFORMS, INCLUDING BUYING INTERNET BUNDLES FOR LEARNING.

MR SPEAKER,

SINCE THE REOPENING OF EXAMINATION CLASSES, I HAVE OBSERVED AND CONFIRMED THAT THERE HAS BEEN AN INSIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PUPILS AND STUDENTS WHO HAVE CONTRACTED COVID-19.

MR SPEAKER,

I HAVE HEARD THE CRIES OF PUPILS, THE CRIES OF STUDENTS, THE CRIES OF TEACHERS AND LECTURERS, THE CRIES OF PARENTS, AND THE CRIES OF OWNERS OF SCHOOLS, INCLUDING THE MINISTRIES OF GENERAL EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION CONCERNING REOPENING OF LEARNING INSTITUTIONS.

MR SPEAKER,

I AM AWARE THAT THE NON-REOPENING OF SCHOOLS HAS LED TO LOSS OF GAINS MADE BY LEARNERS; AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, ALL NON-EXAMINATION CLASSES MAY BE AT THE SAME LEVEL NEXT YEAR. THE CURRENT EXAMINATION CLASSES WOULD HAVE NO SPACE TO PROGRESS NEXT YEAR AND HENCE MAY ALSO LOSE A YEAR.

MR SPEAKER,

IN THIS REGARD, I THEREFORE, ANNOUNCE THE REOPENING OF ALL SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, AND UNIVERSITIES WITH CAUTION BETWEEN 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2020 AND 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2020, SUBJECT TO ADHERENCE TO PUBLIC HEALTH CERTIFICATION, GUIDELINES, REGULATIONS, AND ALSO TO ALLOW FOR SATISFACTORY, AND ADEQUATE PREPAREDNESS BY ALL RELEVANT AUTHORITIES INCLUDING PARENTS AND GUARDIANS.

THE MINISTRY OF GENERAL EDUCATION AND THE MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION MUST COME UP WITH MODALITIES THAT WILL ENSURE ALL PUPILS AND STUDENTS CATCH UP AFTER LOSING SIX MONTHS OF THE ACADEMIC CALENDAR, WHICH MAY INCLUDE REVISING THE CURRICULA. I ALSO URGE THE TWO MINISTRIES TO ENSURE STRICT COMPLIANCE TO THE COVID-19 MEASURES. I AM ENCOURAGED TO REOPEN THE SCHOOLS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE **NEW NORMAL** AS ESPOUSED BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO).

MR SPEAKER,

A STRONG AND EFFECTIVE HEALTHCARE SYSTEM WILL CONTINUE TO BE A PRIORITY FOR GOVERNMENT. THE ASPIRATION OF GOVERNMENT IS TO ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE. IN THIS REGARD, WE ARE STRENGTHENING OUR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM USING THE PRIMARY HEALTHCARE APPROACH.

MR SPEAKER,

MY GOVERNMENT IS WORKING HARD TO REDUCE THE HIGH RATES OF MATERNAL AND CHILD MORTALITY. IN MY LAST ADDRESS I REPORTED THAT WE HAD REDUCED THE OVERALL MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO FROM **398** IN 2014 TO **278** IN 2018 FOR EVERY **100,000** LIVE BIRTHS.

THE HOUSE MAY WISH TO KNOW THAT THESE FIGURES ARE REVIEWED EVERY FIVE YEARS. IN ADDITION, THE NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONAL MATERNAL DEATHS REDUCED TO **138** DEATHS FROM **149** DEATHS PER **100,000** LIVE BIRTHS IN 2016. THIS IS INDICATIVE OF THE REDUCTION IN THE OVERALL MATERNAL MORTALITY RATIO.

MR SPEAKER,

CHILD MORTALITY IS STILL A MAJOR CONCERN. THE COUNTRY IS LOSING CLOSE TO **42** BABIES IN THEIR FIRST MONTH OF LIFE FOR EVERY **1,000** LIVE BIRTHS. GOVERNMENT WILL, THEREFORE, CONTINUE STRENGTHENING THE PROVISION OF PEDIATRIC HEALTH SERVICES WITH PARTICULAR FOCUS ON NEONATAL HEALTH.

MR SPEAKER,

MALARIA STILL REMAINS A MAJOR PUBLIC HEALTH CONCERN IN ZAMBIA. GOVERNMENT HAS, OVER THE YEARS, REPORTED A STEADY DECLINE IN MALARIA CASES AND DEATHS. WE WILL, THEREFORE, CONTINUE TO HEIGHTEN AND ENHANCE DELIVERY OF MALARIA INTERVENTIONS ON A LARGE SCALE. WE WILL PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO VECTOR CONTROL, CASE MANAGEMENT, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SURVEILLANCE.

MR SPEAKER,

THE HIV PREVALENCE RATE AMONG WOMEN AND MEN AGED **15 TO 49** YEARS HAS DECREASED SINCE 2014 FROM **13.3** PERCENT TO **11.1** PERCENT IN 2018. IN ADDITION, **93** PERCENT OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV WERE ON ANTI-RETROVIRAL THERAPY BY 2019. FURTHER, **96** PERCENT OF THE CHILDREN WHO TESTED HIV POSITIVE WERE ON ANTI-RETROVIRAL THERAPY.

WITH REGARD TO THE INCIDENCE OF TUBERCULOSIS, THE COUNTRY RECORDED A REDUCTION FROM **376** PER **100,000** PEOPLE IN 2016 TO **346** PER **100,000** PEOPLE BY END OF 2018.

GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO INVEST IN THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF HIV AND TUBERCULOSIS WITH A VIEW TO CONTROLLING THE DISEASES.

MR SPEAKER,

THE INCREASING INCIDENCE OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES CONTINUES TO BE A SOURCE OF CONCERN TO GOVERNMENT. CURRENTLY, THESE DISEASES ACCOUNT FOR **27** PERCENT OF ALL DEATHS COMPARED TO **23** PERCENT I REPORTED LAST YEAR.

IN THIS REGARD, GOVERNMENT REMAINS COMMITTED TO STRENGTHENING INTERVENTIONS FOR THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES IN THE COUNTRY.

I, FOR ONE, HAVE TRIED TO LEAD THE WAY IN MITIGATING INCIDENCES OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES BY EXERCISING REGULARLY. I ENCOURAGE ALL OF YOU AND EVERY CITIZEN TO ADOPT THIS WAY OF LIFE TO AVOID NON-COMMUNICABLE ILLNESSES.

MR SPEAKER,

ZAMBIA, LIKE ALL OTHER COUNTRIES, HAS NOT BEEN SPARED FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. CASES HAVE BEEN ON THE RISE FROM THE TIME WE RECORDED THE FIRST TWO CASES IN MARCH, THIS YEAR. AND, UNFORTUNATELY, MANY LIVES HAVE BEEN LOST DUE TO THIS PANDEMIC. MY GOVERNMENT HAS RESPONDED WITH A ROBUST MULTI-SECTORAL RESPONSE. THIS HAS INCLUDED A HEIGHTENED SURVEILLANCE AT COMMUNITY LEVEL, IN HEALTH FACILITIES, AT PORTS OF ENTRY, AND IN SENTINEL SITES IN ORDER TO RAPIDLY DETECT AND ISOLATE CASES. GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO SET UP DEDICATED SCREENING, DIAGNOSTIC AND TREATMENT CENTRES FOR PEOPLE THAT HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19.

I CANNOT OVER EMPHASISE THE IMPORTANCE FOR ALL CITIZENS TO STRICTLY ADHERE TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDELINES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE PANDEMIC. LET US WEAR OUR FACE MASKS CONTINUALLY WHEN IN PUBLIC PLACES, OBSERVE SOCIAL DISTANCING AND MINIMISE MOVEMENTS AWAY FROM HOME.

MR SPEAKER,

I MUST STATE THAT RECOVERIES OF COVID-19 PATIENTS HAVE BEEN DOWNPLAYED, INCLUDING TESTIMONIES FROM PEOPLE WHO HAVE RECOVERED ABOUT THE GREAT CASE MANAGEMENT BY OUR HEALTH WORKERS AND THE GENERAL AMBIENCE OF TREATMENT CENTRES.

THE HEALTH WORKERS HAVE DONE THIS AT GREAT RISK AND SACRIFICE. THEY TRULY DESERVE COMMENDATION.

MR SPEAKER,

TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES, GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO CONSTRUCT AND EQUIP HEALTH FACILITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

I AM HAPPY TO REPORT THAT A TOTAL OF **439** HEALTH POSTS AND **24** MINI HOSPITALS, AS WELL AS, CHINSALI AND KALINDAWALO GENERAL HOSPITALS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND ARE NOW OPERATIONAL.

THE LEVY MWANAWASA HOSPITAL HAS BEEN UPGRADED FROM **120** TO **850** BED CAPACITY. WE HAVE ALSO CREATED AN ISOLATION FACILITY FOR COVID-19 PATIENTS AT THE LEVY MWANAWASA HOSPITAL. CONSTRUCTION OF THE LUSAKA SPECIALISED HOSPITAL IS AT **95** PERCENT WHILE THE BANGWEULU GENERAL HOSPITAL IN LUPOSOSHI DISTRICT OF NORTHERN PROVINCE IS AT **30** PERCENT.

FURTHER, WORKS HAVE STARTED AT THE KING SALMAN BIN ABDULLA AZIZ WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S SPECIALISED HOSPITAL IN LUSAKA.

MR SPEAKER,

IN 2019, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONALISED THE NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE SCHEME FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE. SO FAR, **540,000** EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN REGISTERED ON THE SCHEME AND MORE THAN **126** HEALTHCARE FACILITIES HAVE BEEN ACCREDITED TO THE SCHEME. IT IS EXPECTED THAT **800,000** EMPLOYEES WILL BE REGISTERED BY THE END OF THIS YEAR.

MR SPEAKER,

HUMAN RESOURCE FOR HEALTH REMAINS A CRITICAL COMPONENT IN THE PROVISION OF QUALITY HEALTH SERVICES TO OUR PEOPLE. AS PART OF THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, **2,232** HEALTH WORKERS WERE RECRUITED AND DEPLOYED. SINCE 2017, GOVERNMENT HAS RECRUITED OVER **23,000** HEALTH WORKERS.

MR SPEAKER,

THE RECRUITMENT OF THESE HEALTH WORKERS IS PART OF MY GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA TO CREATE JOBS AND REDUCE UNEMPLOYMENT, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE YOUTH.

MR SPEAKER,

THE PROVISION OF WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION SERVICES TO OUR PEOPLE REMAINS HIGH ON OUR DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.

WE HAVE CONTINUED WITH THE CONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION OF WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION INFRASTRUCTURE COUNTRYWIDE.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE KAFUE BULK WATER PROJECT, THAT COMMENCED IN 2016, IS NOW AT **98.3** PERCENT. ONCE COMPLETED, LUSAKA WILL GET AN ADDITIONAL **50** MILLION LITRES OF WATER PER DAY. THE LUSAKA SANITATION PROGRAMME, WHICH COMMENCED IN 2015, IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN 2021. IT INVOLVES THE CONSTRUCTION, REHABILITATION AND EXPANSION OF SANITATION INFRASTRUCTURE IN SELECTED PARTS OF THE CAPITAL CITY. ONCE COMPLETED, THE PROGRAMME WILL IMPROVE THE PROVISION OF SANITATION SERVICES TO A NUMBER OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AS WELL AS **12,000** HOUSEHOLDS IN LUSAKA.

MR SPEAKER,

THE KAFUBU SUSTAINABLE WATER AND SANITATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT IS AT **96** PERCENT.

THIS PROJECT IS AIMED AT REHABILITATING WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE TREATMENT FACILITIES IN NDOLA, LUANSHYA AND MASAITI DISTRICTS. ONCE COMPLETED, THE PROJECT WILL ENSURE SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY OF CLEAN AND SAFE WATER AND PROVISION OF SANITATION SERVICES TO OUR PEOPLE IN THE THREE DISTRICTS.

IN ADDITION, GOVERNMENT HAS COMPLETED THE CHONGWE WATER SUPPLY PROJECT THAT WILL SUPPLY THE TOWN WITH **345** THOUSAND LITRES PER DAY AND BENEFIT **2, 500** HOUSEHOLDS IN THE DISTRICT. THIS PROJECT WILL AMELIORATE THE WATER SUPPLY PROBLEM THAT OUR PEOPLE IN CHONGWE HAVE BEEN FACING SINCE INDEPENDENCE.

FURTHER, GOVERNMENT IS IMPLEMENTING THE KAPUTA WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION PROJECT. THE PROJECT IS AT **77** PERCENT. THIS WILL RESULT IN MORE THAN **3,000** PEOPLE HAVING ACCESS TO CLEAN AND SAFE WATER, AS WELL AS, ADEQUATE SANITATION. THIS PROJECT IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN DECEMBER THIS YEAR.

MR SPEAKER,

THE COMPLETION RATE FOR THE KAFULAFUTA WATER SUPPLY DAM IS AT **82** PERCENT FROM **60** PERCENT IN DECEMBER, 2019. I HAVE SINCE DIRECTED THE MINISTER OF WATER DEVELOPMENT, SANITATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION TO ENSURE THIS PROJECT IS COMPLETED URGENTLY. THE STORAGE CAPACITY FOR THE DAM WILL BE **139** MILLION CUBIC METRES, SUPPLYING UP TO **300,000** CUBIC METRES OF WATER PER DAY.

THIS IS ENOUGH WATER TO SUPPLY AN ESTIMATED **ONE** MILLION PEOPLE IN THE FOUR DISTRICTS OF NDOLA, LUANSHYA, MASAITI AND MPONGWE.

TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES IN THE COUNTRY, MY GOVERNMENT CONTINUED TO IMPLEMENT STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO. 20 OF 2018 ON GROUNDWATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT. IN 2019, **2,821** BOREHOLES WERE REGISTERED AND INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL DATABASE BRINGING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF BOREHOLES REGISTERED TO **34,821**. IN ADDITION, **105** DRILLERS WERE REGISTERED IN 2019, BRINGING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF REGISTERED DRILLERS TO **278**.

THIS MEASURE HAS NOW CONTRIBUTED TO CURBING THE UNREGULATED DRILLING OF BOREHOLES AND THUS PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES THAT PREVENT DEGRADATION OF GROUNDWATER RESOURCES.

MR SPEAKER,

IN ADDITION TO THE WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION PROJECTS, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN UNDERTAKING CONSTRUCTION OF BOREHOLES IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. IN 2019, A TOTAL OF **4,151** BOREHOLES WERE CONSTRUCTED AND EQUIPPED WITH HAND PUMPS. THIS RESULTED IN **ONE MILLION** PEOPLE IN RURAL AREAS HAVING ACCESS TO CLEAN AND SAFE WATER. IN CONTRAST, **1,168** BOREHOLES WERE CONSTRUCTED IN 2018, BENEFITING **292,000** PEOPLE. FURTHER, **146** EXPLORATORY BOREHOLES WERE DRILLED, PROVIDING CLEAN AND SAFE WATER TO **36,500** PEOPLE.

MR SPEAKER,

TO ENSURE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION BY **2030**, IN 2019 MY GOVERNMENT ALSO REHABILITATED **392** BOREHOLES RESULTING IN **98,000** PEOPLE BENEFITING FROM IMPROVED ACCESS TO CLEAN AND SAFE WATER AS COMPARED TO 2018 WHEN **100** BOREHOLES WERE REHABILITATED TO BENEFIT **27,500** PEOPLE.

MR SPEAKER,

UNDER THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK SUPPORTED PROJECT IN WESTERN PROVINCE, **195** SANITATION FACILITIES INVOLVING VENTILATED IMPROVED PIT LATRINES (**VIPS**) HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED IN PUBLIC PLACES SUCH AS MARKETS, SCHOOLS AND HEALTH CENTRES RESULTING IN **122,000** PEOPLE ACCESSING IMPROVED SANITATION FACILITIES IN **16** DISTRICTS OF WESTERN PROVINCE.

MR SPEAKER,

MY GOVERNMENT, WORKING WITH VARIOUS PARTNERS, IS ALSO UNDERTAKING THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOLAR POWERED WATER SCHEMES ACROSS THE COUNTRY. THIS HAS RESULTED IN **31** SCHEMES BEING CONSTRUCTED IN 2019, AND AS A CONSEQUENCE, AN ADDITIONAL **148, 000** PEOPLE NOW HAVE IMPROVED ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION. THIS IS A MARKED IMPROVEMENT FROM **35,000** BENEFICIARIES IN 2018.

CREATING A CONDUCTIVE GOVERNANCE ENVIRONMENT FOR A DIVERSIFIED AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

MR SPEAKER,

BETWEEN 2016 AND 2020, GOVERNMENT FORMULATED A NUMBER OF POLICIES AND ENACTED LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE THE POLICY AND LEGAL ENVIRONMENT.

MR SPEAKER,

NOTABLE AMONG THESE ARE THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR MARKET POLICY, THE NATIONAL LEGAL AID POLICY AND THE NATIONAL TRADE POLICY. FURTHER, LEGISLATION ENACTED INCLUDED THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT NO. 2 OF 2019, PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT ACT NO. 1 OF 2018 AND THE EMPLOYMENT CODE ACT NO. 3 OF 2019.

MR SPEAKER,

TO CUSHION THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE OPERATIONS OF INDUSTRY UNDER THE 'NEW NORMAL', GOVERNMENT ISSUED STATUTORY INSTRUMENT NO. 48 OF 2020. THE STATUTORY INSTRUMENT IS AIMED AT ENSURING THAT THE EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR MARKET REMAINS RESILIENT AND BUSINESS RETAINS VIABILITY DURING THESE TURBULENT TIMES.

MR SPEAKER,

GOVERNMENT HAS MADE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING LEGAL AND REGULATORY REFORMS TO FACILITATE SMOOTH IMPLEMENTATION OF DECENTRALISATION REFORMS.

THE ENACTMENT OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT. NO. 2 OF 2019 GIVES EFFECT TO THE DECENTRALISATION OF FUNCTIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND SERVICES AT ALL LEVELS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT. IT ALSO GUARANTEES DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION OF OUR PEOPLE IN DECISION MAKING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL THROUGH THE CREATION OF WARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES.

MR SPEAKER,

SO FAR, **1,326** WARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN FORMED ACROSS THE COUNTRY OUT OF THE TARGETED **1,624**. THE ENACTMENT OF THE PLANNING AND BUDGETING BILL NO. 22 OF 2019 WILL FURTHER EMPOWER OUR PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.

MR SPEAKER,

TO FURTHER BRING PUBLIC SERVICES CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE, GOVERNMENT HAS CREATED NEW DISTRICTS. I AM HAPPY TO INFORM THIS AUGUST HOUSE THAT THE CONSTRUCTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE IN THESE NEW DISTRICTS IS PROGRESSING WELL. SO FAR, **14** DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION BLOCKS, **12** POST OFFICES, **15** POLICE STATIONS, AND **510** HOUSING UNITS ARE AT **80** PERCENT WHILE **13** CIVIC CENTRES AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE HAVE REACHED **95** PERCENT.

MR SPEAKER,

MY GOVERNMENT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT FIGHTING CORRUPTION IN ALL ITS FORMS IS KEY TO PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

THIS GOVERNMENT WILL NOT TOLERATE CORRUPTION. ANY INDIVIDUAL FOUND WANTING BY THE COURTS OF LAW WOULD NOT ENJOY ANY PROTECTION FROM THIS GOVERNMENT. IT DOES NOT MATTER WHICH POLITICAL PARTY YOU BELONG TO OR YOUR SOCIAL STATUS. THE LAW WILL BE APPLIED EQUALLY TO ALL THOSE FOUND WANTING.

MY GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO STRENGTHEN AND ROLL OUT THE INTEGRITY COMMITTEE INITIATIVE AIMED AT ENSURING THE PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION IN BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS. THERE ARE CURRENTLY **94** INTEGRITY COMMITTEES COMPARED TO **48** IN 2016. MOST OF THESE ARE IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.

MR SPEAKER,

TO ENHANCE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY, I DIRECT ALL CONTROLLING OFFICERS IN GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES, PROVINCES AND SPENDING AGENCIES TO ENSURE THAT THE INTEGRITY COMMITTEES IN THEIR INSTITUTIONS ARE OPERATIONAL, SUPPORTED AND EFFECTIVE. IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT INTEGRITY COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN INCLUDED AS A PRINCIPLE FEATURE IN THE PERFORMANCE CONTRACTS OF PERMANENT SECRETARIES.

I ALSO URGE PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS TO EMBRACE THE GOOD PRACTICE OF ESTABLISHING INTEGRITY COMMITTEES AND ENSURING THAT THEY PREVENT CORRUPTION BEFORE IT OCCURS. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO ENSURE PROCUREMENT PRACTICES ARE ABOVE BOARD TO AVOID OVERPRICING AND OTHER PROCUREMENT MALPRACTICES.

MR SPEAKER,

WE HAVE IMPLEMENTED THE SMART ZAMBIA TRANSFORMATION AGENDA TO MODERNISE THE DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY. WE HAVE TRANSFORMED THE WAY WE OPERATE IN GOVERNMENT, THE WAY WE SHARE INFORMATION AND THE WAY WE ENGAGE WITH OUR CITIZENS.

THIS HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED, OF LATE, BY THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. GOVERNMENT AND SEVERAL PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS ARE CONDUCTING BUSINESS ELECTRONICALLY.

SOME OF OUR INSTITUTIONS ARE ENCOURAGING THEIR MEMBERS OF STAFF TO WORK REMOTELY FROM HOME, BUT WITHOUT AFFECTING THE QUALITY OF THEIR SERVICE DELIVERY.

THIS IS IN LINE WITH THE SMART ZAMBIA TRANSFORMATION AGENDA WHICH WAS THE THRUST OF MY 2015 ADDRESS TO THIS AUGUST HOUSE. THE DEPLOYMENT OF ELECTRONIC SERVICES THROUGH THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE BUS AND PAYMENT GATEWAY IS PROMOTING ACCESS TO SERVICES BY OUR PEOPLE FROM ANY LOCATION AND AT ANY TIME OF THE DAY. SO FAR, **44** SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC ON THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE BUS.

AN ADDITIONAL **100** SERVICES, INCLUDING, THOSE RELATING TO LAND, MINING, TOLLING AND TOURISM, ARE EXPECTED TO BE PROVIDED ONLINE BY DECEMBER 2021.

MR SPEAKER,

MY GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUED TO SCORE SUCCESSES IN ENSURING A WELL-INFORMED CITIZENRY, WHICH IS A FUNDAMENTAL PRE-REQUISITE FOR DEEPENING OUR GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT. WE NOW BOAST OF AN EVER-EXPANDING MEDIA ENVIRONMENT. CURRENTLY, THE NUMBER OF RADIO STATIONS IN OPERATION COUNTRYWIDE HAS INCREASED FROM **88** IN 2016 TO **126** THIS YEAR. SIMILARLY, THE COUNTRY HAS SEEN A STEADY PROGRESSION IN THE NUMBER OF TELEVISION STATIONS ESTABLISHED AND OPERATIONAL COUNTRYWIDE. WE NOW HAVE **39** TELEVISION STATIONS COMPARED TO ONLY **19** IN 2016.

I NOTE WITH PRIDE THAT ZAMBIA IS AMONG THE FIRST COUNTRIES IN AFRICA TO FULLY AND SUCCESSFULLY MIGRATE TO DIGITAL TELEVISION BROADCASTING SERVICES FROM THE ANALOGUE TERRESTRIAL TELEVISION BROADCASTING PLATFORM. LAST YEAR, GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONED THE REMAINING EIGHT DIGITAL TRANSMITTERS AND NOW ALL THE **73** DIGITAL TRANSMISSION SITES FOR TELEVISION BROADCASTING ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE FULLY OPERATIONAL. THIS MEANS THAT ALL PARTS OF OUR COUNTRY ARE NOW ABLE TO ACCESS THE TELEVISION SIGNAL. ZAMBIA'S MIGRATION FROM ANALOGUE TO DIGITAL TERRESTRIAL TELEVISION TRANSMISSION HAS BEEN A WORTHWHILE VENTURE AS IT HAS OPENED UP THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY.

OUR PEOPLE CAN NOW OWN TELEVISION STATIONS, THEREBY CREATING JOBS AND WEALTH. FURTHERMORE, THE SIX NEW PROVINCIAL TELEVISION STUDIOS IN EASTERN, WESTERN, LUAPULA, MUCHINGA, CENTRAL AND NORTHERN PROVINCES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AND ARE DUE TO BE HANDED OVER TO GOVERNMENT ONCE EQUIPMENT IS INSTALLED. IT IS MY GOVERNMENT'S RESOLVE THAT ALL TEN PROVINCES HAVE PROVINCIAL TELEVISION STUDIOS TO TAKE INFORMATION CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE.

MR SPEAKER,

THESE ARE COMMENDABLE STRIDES BY ANY STRETCH OF IMAGINATION. THE CHALLENGE IS NOW UP TO OUR PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE YOUTH, TO CREATE CONTENT THAT IS RELEVANT TO THE NEEDS OF OUR COUNTRY AND TO ENSURE THAT OUR TELEVISION PROGRAMMES ARE OF HIGH QUALITY. QUALITY PROGRAMMES WILL GIVE US A GREATER FOOTPRINT ON THE GLOBAL STAGE. WE WANT OUR COUNTRY TO CREATE BETTER PAYING JOBS IN THIS INDUSTRY.

WHILE I AM DELIGHTED THAT THE FILM INDUSTRY IS NOW BOOMING IN OUR COUNTRY WITH MOTLEY FILMS EVEN ON INTERNATIONAL CHANNELS, I HOPE MORE YOUNG PEOPLE WILL ENTER THIS CAREER ONCE THE STUDIOS ARE OPERATIONAL.

MR SPEAKER,

IT IS MY GOVERNMENT'S RESOLVE THAT THE MEDIA SHOULD OPERATE INDEPENDENTLY. TO THIS END, I AM PROUD THAT THE MEDIA IN THIS COUNTRY IS PLURAL, FREE AND DIVERSE.

THE 2021 GENERAL ELECTIONS

MR SPEAKER,

IN FURTHERANCE OF THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE AND IN LINE WITH THE CONSTITUTION OF ZAMBIA, THE COUNTRY WILL HOLD GENERAL ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR ON THURSDAY, 12THAUGUST, 2021.

MR SPEAKER,

TO ADEQUATELY PREPARE FOR THE FORTHCOMING GENERAL ELECTIONS, THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF ZAMBIA WILL UNDERTAKE A VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE THIS YEAR. THIS WILL INCLUDE MOBILE AS WELL AS ONLINE VOTER PRE-REGISTRATION.

I URGE ALL ELIGIBLE VOTERS TO BE PATRIOTIC AND EXERCISE THEIR CIVIC DUTY TO VOTE BY PARTICIPATING IN THE UPCOMING VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE. WE WILL ALL BE CALLED UPON TO EITHER REGISTER OR VERIFY OUR DETAILS UNDER THE NEW REGISTER. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO EXERCISE OUR RIGHT TO VOTE AND BE ABLE TO CHOOSE LEADERS OF OUR CHOICE.

MR SPEAKER,

A NEW REGISTER FOR THE 2021 GENERAL ELECTIONS WILL ALSO BE PREPARED BY THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF ZAMBIA. THIS MEASURE WILL, AMONG OTHER BENEFITS, ELIMINATE POSSIBLE DUPLICATE RECORDS.

MR SPEAKER,

TO ENSURE AS MANY ELIGIBLE VOTERS AS POSSIBLE EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT TO VOTE IN THE 2021 GENERAL ELECTIONS, GOVERNMENT HAS EMBARKED ON THE MOBILE ISSUANCE OF NATIONAL REGISTRATION CARDS. THIS EXERCISE IS INTENDED TO INCREASE COVERAGE AND REACH OUT TO OUR CITIZENS WHO LIVE IN FAR-FLUNG AREAS ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

I, THEREFORE, CALL UPON ALL STAKEHOLDERS, INCLUDING HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THIS AUGUST HOUSE, TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS, CIVIC LEADERS, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND ALL PATRIOTIC ZAMBIANS TO ENSURE THAT ALL ELIGIBLE CITIZENS ACQUIRE OR REPLACE THEIR NATIONAL REGISTRATION CARDS.

MR SPEAKER,

IT IS MY EXPECTATION THAT THE CAMPAIGNS FOR THE 2021 GENERAL ELECTIONS WILL BE ISSUE-BASED AND PEACEFUL. THERE SHOULD BE NO ROOM FOR VIOLENT CAMPAIGNS. ELECTIONS COME AND GO.

AS CITIZENS, THEREFORE, WE HAVE A DUTY TO COME TOGETHER AND FORGE AHEAD WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR COUNTRY AFTER THE ELECTIONS. ELECTIONS SHOULD NOT DIVIDE US. WE ARE ONE PEOPLE, AND ONE NATION BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER ELECTIONS. THE SAME SHOULD APPLY TO THE FORTH-COMING BY-ELECTIONS IN MWANSABOMBWE AND LUKASHYA CONSTITUENCIES SET FOR 17TH SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR. THIS IS WHAT WE ALL DESERVE. THIS IS WHAT WE SHOULD ALL STRIVE TO ACHIEVE. THIS IS WHAT WILL CONSOLIDATE ZAMBIA'S POSITION AS A BEACON OF PEACE.

MR SPEAKER,

I, THEREFORE, CALL UPON ALL POLITICAL LEADERS, THEIR MEMBERS AND ORDINARY CITIZENS TO PREACH PEACE AND LOVE DURING CAMPAIGNS AS WELL AS REFRAIN FROM UTTERANCES AND ACTIONS THAT MAY INCITE VIOLENCE BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE GENERAL ELECTIONS. WE SHOULD, AT ALL TIMES, INCULCATE THE VALUE OF PEACE AND LOVE AMONG OUR MEMBERS.

MR SPEAKER,

AMONG OUR CHERISHED NATIONAL VALUES IS ***PATRIOTISM AND NATIONAL UNITY.***

CONCLUSION

MR SPEAKER,

WE ARE DETERMINED TO TURN THE ECONOMY AROUND. WE WILL DO SO BY THE DEDICATION, RESILIENCE AND INNOVATION OF THIS GOVERNMENT TOGETHER WITH OUR PEOPLE. WE WILL BUILD OUR ECONOMY BY HARD WORK AND PRUDENT USE OF OUR RESOURCES. ALL OF US MUST PUT OUR SHOULDERS TO THE WHEEL.

MR SPEAKER,

WE MUST GET UP EACH DAY TO DO SOMETHING PRODUCTIVE FOR A BETTER TOMORROW. SOMETHING TO IMPROVE OUR OURSELVES, OUR FAMILIES, AND OUR COMMUNITIES. LET US SPEND OUR TIME PRODUCTIVELY RATHER THAN WASTING PRECIOUS TIME SPEWING OUT VITRIOL ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

MR SPEAKER,

LET ME THANK OUR PEOPLE FOR THE CONTINUED FAITH AND BELIEF IN MY ADMINISTRATION. YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IS WHAT HAS GIVEN US THE IMPETUS TO SOLDIER ON, DESPITE THE MANY CHALLENGES WE HAVE FACED. LET US CONTINUE TO PUT OUR COUNTRY FIRST IN ALL WE DO. THERE IS ONLY ONE ZAMBIA, THE ZAMBIA THAT BELONGS TO ALL OF US, THE ZAMBIA WE SHOULD BE PROUD OF. AND THE ZAMBIA WE WANT.

MR SPEAKER,

LET ME ALSO THANK OUR COOPERATING PARTNERS WHO HAVE CONTINUED TO BELIEVE IN US, AND OUR DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.

ON BEHALF OF THE NATION, I WANT TO ASSURE OUR COOPERATING PARTNERS THAT THEY HAVE OUR GRATITUDE.

MR SPEAKER,

THERE IS EVERY HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. AS IT IS WRITTEN IN THE BIBLE BOOK OF ROMANS CHAPTER 15, VERSE 13:

MAY THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING, SO THAT BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT YOU MAY ABOUND IN HOPE.

WE ARE MORE THAN READY TO FORGE AHEAD AND MEET OUR CHALLENGES HEAD ON. WE PROMISED THE ZAMBIAN PEOPLE A BETTER ZAMBIA AND, TODAY, ZAMBIA IS BETTER THAN WE FOUND IT. WE WILL CONTINUE TO CHANGE THE FACE OF OUR COUNTRY. WE WILL CONTINUE TO DELIVER ON OUR PROMISES FOR A BETTER ZAMBIA. WITH DEDICATION AND HARD WORK, WE WILL GET THERE. WITH GOD ON OUR SIDE, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE.

MR SPEAKER,

DEDICATION, RESILIENCE AND INNOVATION MUST BE OUR DEVELOPMENTAL AGENDA WHILE PURSUING ECONOMIC RECOVERY FOR THE ZAMBIA WE WANT AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, WHILE CONTINUING TO LIVE IN THE **NEW NORMAL**.

MR SPEAKER,

I NOW DECLARE THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE TWELFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OFFICIALLY OPENED.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL, GOD BLESS OUR GREAT NATION, ZAMBIA.

I THANK YOU.