

STATEMENT (FINAL COPY)

BY

MR. HAKAINDE HICHILEMA

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

ON THE

DECLARATION OF DROUGHT AS A NATIONAL DISASTER

AND EMERGENCY

THURSDAY, 29TH FEBRUARY, 2024

COUNTRYMEN, WOMEN, AND YOUTH

TODAY, WITH A HEAVY HEART, WE ADDRESS YOU AS OUR BELOVED COUNTRY FACES A SEVERE DROUGHT, THE WORST OF ITS KIND, CAUSED BY THE EL NIÑO WEATHER CONDITIONS IN THE 2023/2024 RAIN SEASON INFLUENCED BY THE CLIMATE CHANGE PHENOMENON.

THIS DROUGHT HAS DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES ON MANY CRITICAL SECTORS SUCH AS AGRICULTURE, WATER AVAILABILITY, AND ENERGY SUPPLY, RISKING OUR NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS OF MILLIONS OF OUR PEOPLE. THIS ALSO NEGATIVELY AFFECTS OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.

THE DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY THE PROLONGED DRY SPELL IS IMMENSE, WITH 84 SEVERELY AFFECTED DISTRICTS IN LUSAKA, CENTRAL, COPPERBELT EASTERN, NORTH-WESTERN, WESTERN, AND SOUTHERN PROVINCES.

AT NATIONAL LEVEL THE ESTIMATED PLANTED AREA FOR MAIZE IS 2.2 MILLION HECTARES AND OF THIS, APPROXIMATELY 1 MILLION HECTARES HAS BEEN DESTROYED.

THE DRY SPELL IS PROJECTED TO CONTINUE, EVEN INTO THE MONTH OF MARCH 2024, AFFECTING OVER 1 MILLION OF OUR FARMING HOUSEHOLDS.

EQUALLY AFFECTED IS THE ENERGY SECTOR THAT IS EXPECTED TO HAVE A DEFICIT OF AROUND 430 MEGAWATTS OF ELECTRICITY, POTENTIALLY REACHING MORE THAN 520 MEGAWATTS BY DECEMBER 2024.

THE CURRENT DROUGHT CONDITIONS HAVE ALSO AFFECTED THE AVAILABILITY OF BOTH GROUND AND SURFACE WATER, PASTURE FOR LIVESTOCK AND WILDLIFE AND HAS POTENTIAL TO INCREASE THE INCIDENCE OF HUMAN AND ANIMAL CONFLICT, AS WELL AS DISEASE.

THE DROUGHT COMPOUNDS THE CHALLENGES THE COUNTRY WAS ALREADY FACING, SUCH AS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE CHOLERA OUTBREAK.

THIS IS DIVERTING RESOURCES INITIALLY INTENDED FOR ACCELERATING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

FELLOW CITIZENS

IN VIEW OF THESE CHALLENGES, URGENT AND DECISIVE ACTION IS REQUIRED FROM ALL OF US. THE GOVERNMENT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DISASTER MANAGEMENT ACT NO. 13 OF 2010, AND OTHER RELEVANT LEGISLATION DECLARES THE PROLONGED DRY-SPELL A NATIONAL DISASTER, AND EMERGENCY.

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, YOUR GOVERNMENT WILL UNDERTAKE THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS, AMONG MANY OTHERS:

SHORT-TERM MEASURES

- **CHANNELING** MORE RESOURCES TOWARDS HUMANITARIAN RELIEF PURPOSES. TO ENSURE THAT OUR AFFECTED CITIZENS DO NOT GO HUNGRY.
- **IMPORTING** ADDITIONAL ELECTRICITY AND RATIONING ENERGY USE AS WELL AS PROMOTING ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES.
- **ENSURING THAT** CITIZENS DO NOT ENGAGE IN BUSH BURNING.
- **SOURCE** ADDITIONAL MAIZE TO MITIGATE THE DEFICIT.
- **LEVERAGING** ZAMBIA'S DEFENCE FORCES TO EXPAND IRRIGATION SCHEMES AS A WAY TO INCREASE FOOD PRODUCTION.
- **GET** OUR FARMERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO EMBARK ON PLANTING EARLY AND WINTER MAIZE THROUGH VARIOUS FORMS OF IRRIGATION.
- **MINISTRY** OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL WELFARE TO ENHANCE THE NUMBERS UNDER THE SOCIAL CASH TRANSFER SO THAT MORE VULNERABLE PEOPLE ARE COVERED.
- **FOOD RESERVE AGENCY** TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY SALES TO THE VULNERABLE AND WORK HAND IN HAND WITH THE DMMU ON THE PROVISION OF PURCHASABLE MAIZE IN THE COMMUNITIES.
- **CALLING** UPON OUR PARTNERS, LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL TO AVAIL FOOD AND OTHER SUPPORT THAT THEY MAY HAVE, IN ORDER TO PROVIDE

THE NEEDED RELIEF.

- WE ARE PLEASED, AND THANKFUL THAT SOME PARTNERS, SUCH AS THE BRITISH, THE UN SYSTEM, THE WORLD BANK, AND OTHERS HAVE ALREADY MADE INDICATIONS THAT THEY WILL PROVIDE SUPPORT.
- WE CALL UPON OUR OFFICIAL AND PRIVATE CREDITORS TO WORK WITH US IN ERNEST TO BRING CLOSURE TO THE DEBT RESTRUCTURING PROGRAM.
- THIS WILL HELP PROVIDE CERTAINTY FOR OUR COUNTRY AND THE FINANCIAL MARKETS AS WE GRAPPLE WITH THE INCREASING EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.

LONGER TERM MEASURES

- **FOCUS** ON ENHANCING WATER HARVESTING MECHANISMS TO ENABLE PRECISION AND OTHER IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT SO AS TO STIMULATE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

SPECIFICALLY, WE WILL AGGRESSIVELY INCREASE INVESTMENT IN WATER HARVESTING AND TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT IRRIGATION AND PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS.

- **INCREASE** THE PROVISION OF SOFT AGRICULTURE LOANS TO OUR CITIZENS FOR MECHANISATION AND INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY.
- **ACCELERATE** THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES SUCH AS SOLAR, WIND AND OTHERS.

TO ACHIEVE THESE MEASURES, WE SHALL THEREFORE REALIGN THE 2024 NATIONAL BUDGET.

THESE MEASURES ARE BY NO MEANS EXHAUSTIVE, YOUR GOVERNMENT COMMITS TO ADAPTING AND ENHANCING RESPONSES AS THE SITUATION EVOLVES.

COUNTRYMEN, WOMEN, AND YOUTH:

THE DISASTER AND EMERGENCY IS SERIOUS, AND THE GOVERNMENT IS RESPONDING URGENTLY WITH THE UTMOST DEDICATION AS A UNITED TEAM.

AS A RESILIENT AND RESOURCEFUL NATION, WE WILL STAND TOGETHER IN UNITY AND SOLIDARITY AS ONE PEOPLE, AND TOGETHER WE WILL OVERCOME. WE WILL WORK WITH ALL FARMERS, FARMING INPUT SUPPLIERS, GRAIN TRADERS, MILLERS, ACADEMICS, PROFESSIONALS, REGULATORS, CHURCH, CIVIL SOCIETY, UNIONS, TRADITIONAL LEADERS, AND POLITICAL PARTIES.

TO OUR RESILIENT FARMERS THROUGHOUT OUR VAST LAND, WE EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE FOR HEEDING THE CALL TO CULTIVATE MAIZE AND OTHER CROPS.

DESPITE NATURE'S CHALLENGES, YOUR UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO COMBAT EL NIÑO SITUATION THROUGH INVENTIVE IRRIGATION METHODS, LIKE OX CART-DRIVEN WATER BOWSERS AND WHEELBARROWS, IS COMMENDABLE, AND QUITE SIMPLY HEROIC. YOU HAVE OUR FULL SUPPORT.

YOUR RESILIENCE AND BRAVERY SERVE AS A PROFOUND INSPIRATION, MOTIVATING US TO WORK DILIGENTLY.

TO OUR VALUED GLOBAL COMMUNITY AND COOPERATING PARTNERS, WE APPRECIATE YOUR PROMPT AND SUBSTANTIVE RESPONSE AND ASSISTANCE. OUR GRATITUDE EXTENDS TO YOUR GOVERNMENTS AND THE PEOPLE OF YOUR NATIONS.

TO REITERATE, WE CALL UPON OUR CHURCHES, TRADITIONAL LEADERS, CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS, FARMERS UNIONS AND ALL STAKEHOLDERS TO JOIN HANDS WITH GOVERNMENT IN MITIGATING THIS NATIONAL CRISIS.

FROM NOW ONWARDS, AND FOLLOWING TODAY'S ANNOUNCEMENT, WE WILL PULL TOGETHER A MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM, INCLUDING GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR, UNDER SPECIFIC WORK STREAMS, TO COMPREHENSIVELY AND EFFECTIVELY RESPOND TO THIS DISASTER AND EMERGENCY.

**FOR US THE WORK BEGINS NOW.
MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL
AND MAY GOD BLESS OUR COUNTRY**