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HAKAINDE HICHILEMA — 7TH PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

Progress Made in the Application of National Values and Principles

Date: 20 February 2026

Location: Parliament Buildings, Lusaka

Occasion: Address to the Fifth Session of the Thirteenth National Assembly on the Progress Made in the Application of National Values and Principles

Madam Speaker,

Good morning.

In accordance with Article 9(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Zambia, we are pleased to join this august House to report on the progress made in the application of our national values and principles.

Madam Speaker,

We take this opportunity to congratulate and welcome the newly elected Member of Parliament for Chawama Constituency, Honourable Bright Nundwe, following the by-election held on Thursday, 15th January 2026, which passed peacefully and without violence.

We urge the Honourable Member to represent the people of Chawama Constituency with honour, diligence and responsibility.

Madam Speaker,

During this session, this House was privileged to host His Excellency Mr John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, on Thursday, 5th February 2026.

In his special address to this august House, President Mahama reaffirmed the warm, cordial and historical bilateral relations that exist between our two countries and peoples.

President Mahama reminded us that our democracies have been built through sacrifice and resilience, anchored on African values.

His visit reaffirmed the enduring spirit of Pan-Africanism as espoused by our founding fathers, Dr Kenneth David Kaunda and Dr Kwame Nkrumah.

Madam Speaker,

As a nation, we have continued to embrace our national values and principles as specified under Article 8 of the Constitution, namely:

1. Morality and ethics;
2. Patriotism and national unity;
3. Democracy and constitutionalism;
4. Human dignity, equity, social justice, equality and non-discrimination;
5. Good governance and integrity; and

6. Sustainable development.

Madam Speaker,

These national values and principles are not merely constitutional requirements, but a moral compass that shapes our character and defines our national identity.

They provide guidance in policy formulation and form the bedrock upon which our programmes and interventions are implemented.

Madam Speaker,

We will now proceed to highlight the progress made in the application of our national values and principles, while recognising that there is still much work ahead of us.

Morality and Ethics

Madam Speaker,

Zambia is a peaceful nation, a caring nation and a Christian nation.

Morality and ethics are important values that shape the character of our families, communities and the nation at large.

It is within this moral and ethical framework that Government continues to address social vices such as alcohol abuse, drug and substance abuse, teenage pregnancies, child marriages and gender-based violence.

To address these challenges, Government has implemented several interventions, including free education, skills training, empowerment initiatives and nationwide sensitisation programmes targeting communities, workers, civic leaders and traditional leaders.

Child marriage, teenage pregnancy and child defilement remain serious social challenges in our society.

No country can realise its full potential if its girls and boys are left behind. We can therefore all agree that the time has come to end child marriage.

Madam Speaker,

Government continues to sensitise traditional leaders and communities across the country on the harmful effects of these social ills.

In addition, thousands of teenage girls who dropped out of school due to marriage are now receiving counselling and are being reintegrated into the education system through the free education policy.

We do this because we love our children, we care about our children and we will work tirelessly to ensure that every young citizen benefits from the opportunities being created.

Madam Speaker,

Gender-based violence remains a major public concern in our country.

Government continues to address this vice through interventions such as the establishment of a national call centre, one-stop centres and fast-track courts for victims of gender-based violence.

We urge victims, relatives and members of the public to report all instances of gender-based violence. The law must take its course and perpetrators must be brought to justice.

We commend our traditional leaders, the Church and other stakeholders for their continued support in the fight against these vices.

Madam Speaker,

We remain deeply concerned about the increasing divorce rates in our country.

Loving, caring and strong families are the foundation of a responsible and prosperous nation.

We therefore call upon our partners, traditional leaders, marriage counsellors, religious leaders and civic leaders to join hands in supporting families and upholding the sanctity of marriage.

In this regard, Government continues to reform the legal framework in order to protect the public from harmful online behaviour and cybercrime.

We also call upon citizens to ensure that digital platforms are used responsibly and productively.

At the same time, we remain inspired by the creativity and innovation of our entrepreneurial youth online, and we encourage everyone to enjoy these freedoms responsibly.

Patriotism and National Unity

Madam Speaker,

Over the last four years, we have made significant progress in fostering patriotism and strengthening national unity.

We have promoted the consumption and support of locally produced goods and services in order to empower Zambian businesses and hardworking citizens.

Government has also strengthened local content policies.

Last year, Statutory Instrument No. 68 of 2025 on the Promotion of Local Content in the Mining Sector was issued.

This has created more opportunities for local suppliers to secure contracts, thereby generating more jobs and income for Zambians.

Madam Speaker,

Human trafficking remains a concern due to our geographical location.

To curb this vice, the UPND New Dawn Administration has fully operationalised the Department of Anti-Human Trafficking under the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security.

The department, working closely with other law enforcement agencies, is leading efforts to eradicate human trafficking.

Madam Speaker,

Social media has created opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship, self-expression and information sharing.

Unfortunately, some individuals continue to misuse these platforms to spread harmful content, fake news, misinformation, disinformation and hate speech. Social media is also being used to commit cybercrime and harass innocent citizens.

Public procurement has also been reformed to provide preference to locally produced goods and services, resulting in more jobs, business opportunities and revenue for Zambians and the Treasury.

Madam Speaker,

To continue delivering essential services, including nationwide free education, Government depends on effective revenue collection.

A responsible and caring society requires a responsible and fair tax system.

Paying taxes is an expression of patriotism and mutual responsibility.

Government has therefore modernised and simplified tax administration through digital platforms to make compliance easier for citizens.

Madam Speaker,

Under the UPND New Dawn Administration, Zambia has witnessed an unprecedented reduction in political violence and cadreism.

Under our watch, there is no room for political violence, cadreism or lawlessness.

Let me be clear: no one is above the law.

Madam Speaker,

This Administration has consistently promoted unity in diversity through the principle of “One Zambia, One Nation, One People”.

Our efforts are reflected in decentralisation and the equitable distribution of national resources through instruments such as the significantly enhanced Constituency Development Fund (CDF).

A caring and united Zambia is one that provides equal opportunities and distributes resources fairly without discrimination.

On the cultural front, we are pleased to witness increasing participation of traditional leaders in each other’s ceremonies, which is a clear demonstration of our unity in diversity.

Last year, we had the honour of meeting all traditional leaders at Mulungushi International Conference Centre as part of our ongoing efforts to strengthen national unity.

This engagement has enhanced mutual understanding and appreciation of our shared cultural heritage.

Indeed, we are One Zambia, One Nation, One People.

Democracy and Constitutionalism

Madam Speaker,

To enhance democracy and promote inclusivity in governance, we amended the Constitution to ensure fair and equitable representation of our people.

We thank citizens across the country for their valuable submissions to the Mushabati Constitutional Technical Committee.

We also commend this House for successfully passing the Bill.

We are proud that women, youths and persons with disabilities will now be guaranteed representation at all levels of governance for the first time in our nation's history.

Through the mixed-member system at local government and national levels, Parliament supported this progressive reform process.

The amended Constitution also provides for an increase in the number of seats in the National Assembly.

These reforms will result in greater representation, more opportunities for women and youths and increased access to resources for vulnerable communities.

Madam Speaker,

Our Administration remains committed to preserving freedom of assembly and association.

There can be no development without peace.

As we approach the 2026 General Elections scheduled for 13th August 2026, we remain committed to ensuring free, fair, credible and peaceful elections.

Democracy thrives on ideas, persuasion and respect for divergent views.

We therefore implore all political actors to promote peace, tolerance and unity.

Let us choose unity over division, dialogue over conflict and progress over unnecessary politicking.

Madam Speaker,

Our stable and peaceful environment has attracted unprecedented investment, translating into more jobs, businesses and opportunities for our people.

This is a major achievement, although we acknowledge that there is still more work to be done.

Madam Speaker,

Access to information and media freedom remain fundamental pillars of democratic governance.

Our Administration has undertaken legal reforms aimed at modernising the media landscape.

Government enacted the Independent Broadcasting Authority Act No. 26 of 2025 and the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation Act No. 26 of 2025.

These reforms are intended to promote independence, fairness and accountability in broadcasting while safeguarding press freedom and the public interest.

Human Dignity, Equity, Social Justice, Equality and Non-Discrimination

Madam Speaker,

Since 2021, the UPND New Dawn Administration has continued to advance human dignity, equity, social justice, equality and non-discrimination as central pillars of national development.

We have expanded community-driven investments and strengthened social protection programmes.

We have empowered women and youths and improved access to education, healthcare, water and justice.

These are the foundations of a caring and inclusive Zambian society.

Madam Speaker,

Our commitment is demonstrated by the substantial increase in the Constituency Development Fund allocation from K1.6 million in 2021 to K40 million per constituency in 2026.

This is a transformational achievement and, with God's grace and the continued support of the Zambian people, we intend to increase it even further.

Through the CDF, we have empowered youths, women and vulnerable citizens, while providing bursaries for learners in boarding schools and skills development institutions.

This is a giant step in the right direction and we will not rest until every Zambian family feels the benefits of this generational transformation.

Madam Speaker,

We are delivering for the people of Zambia from a place of love and deep care:

- More communities now have access to lifesaving ambulance services.
- More mothers in rural areas can deliver safely in improved maternity facilities.
- More children are learning in decent classrooms with desks instead of sitting on the floor.
- More students are receiving bursaries and meal allowances.
- More teachers and health workers are delivering services across urban and rural communities.
- More citizens now have access to clean and safe drinking water.
- More traders are conducting business in modern market facilities.
- More small-scale livestock farmers are accessing dipping facilities, vaccines and treatment drugs.
- More communities are becoming safer through the construction of police posts and provision of vehicles.

Fellow citizens, we remain committed to delivering for every Zambian because we genuinely care about their welfare.

Madam Speaker,

Human dignity and social justice cannot be achieved without strong social protection programmes.

Government has expanded social cash transfer programmes across the country.

The social cash transfer benefit for vulnerable households was doubled from K200 to K400 per month, while households with persons living with disabilities now receive K600 per month.

This year alone, the number of beneficiary households has increased from 1.3 million to 1.5 million.

Under the Food Security Pack Programme, beneficiaries have increased from 240,000 to 320,000 vulnerable but viable farmers.

Government has also expanded the Cash-for-Work Programme to all 116 districts across the country.

Madam Speaker,

Access to clean and safe water and adequate sanitation remains essential to human dignity and public health.

Government has implemented various interventions that have enabled over 4.9 million citizens to access clean and safe water.

While this is commendable progress, our work continues until every Zambian has access to safe water.

Madam Speaker,

The UPND New Dawn Administration remains committed to removing barriers to education.

In 2021, we reintroduced free education because education remains the greatest equaliser and inheritance.

As a result of this policy, over 2.5 million children have returned to school.

To support quality education delivery, Government has recruited 41,917 teachers, with an additional 2,000 teachers to be recruited this year.

Madam Speaker,

We have expanded support to vulnerable girls through the Keeping Girls in School Initiative.

The programme benefitted 127,233 girls in 2025, compared to 38,551 in 2021, while coverage expanded from 39 districts to 95 districts.

Support for menstrual hygiene management has also increased significantly, benefiting over 1.7 million girls in 2025 compared to 186,670 in 2021.

Furthermore, the school feeding programme has expanded from 1.5 million learners in 2021 to 4.7 million learners in 2025.

These interventions are improving school attendance, retention and learning outcomes, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

In 2025, Zambia recorded the highest-ever Grade 12 public school pass rate of 70 percent.

This achievement was not accidental. It was the direct outcome of deliberate and well-planned policy reforms.

We pay tribute to all teachers, pupils and parents for this remarkable achievement.

Madam Speaker,

To promote human dignity and equity, Government has prioritised investment in healthcare.

Since 2021, over 18,000 health workers have been recruited, with an additional 2,000 to be recruited this year.

Government has also continued constructing and equipping health facilities across the country to improve access to healthcare services.

Madam Speaker,

To promote dignity, social justice and fairness in employment, Government has implemented important labour reforms, including a more transparent public sector recruitment system.

We also introduced measures allowing partial withdrawal of pension benefits.

As of January this year, over 518,000 members of the National Pension Scheme Authority had accessed their 20 percent partial withdrawal amounting to K10.6 billion.

We have further extended pension coverage to the informal sector, which constitutes over 70 percent of our workforce.

Government has also increased the minimum wage and strengthened occupational health and safety legislation in line with the decent work agenda.

Madam Speaker,

To improve access to justice, Government has deployed resident High Court judges to all ten provinces and expanded legal aid services to more districts.

Construction and rehabilitation of local courts have also been completed in several districts.

Our Administration also remains focused on reducing overcrowding in correctional facilities to uphold the dignity of inmates.

Madam Speaker,

Government continues to promote youth empowerment through skills development and economic inclusion programmes under the Youth Empowerment Fund, the Citizens Economic Empowerment Commission and the Constituency Development Fund.

Madam Speaker,

The UPND New Dawn Administration remains committed to promoting equality and inclusion through expanded access to electricity.

Nearly 60,000 new electricity connections have been completed through the Rural Electrification Authority.

Government has also significantly reduced electricity connection fees for households in rural and peri-urban areas under the Accelerated Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation Initiative.

Madam Speaker,

As part of our commitment to service delivery, we confronted the electricity challenge directly and have significantly reduced load shedding, with some areas experiencing complete relief.

We acknowledge the inconvenience citizens experienced during those difficult periods and thank the nation for its patience and resilience.

Government is implementing major reforms in the energy sector to ensure long-term energy security and a brighter future for Zambia.

These measures include investment in solar power generation, expansion of clean coal energy, electricity imports and continued hydroelectric expansion.

Good Governance and Integrity

Madam Speaker,

The UPND New Dawn Administration remains committed to promoting good governance and integrity.

The fight against corruption remains central to our agenda.

Today, corruption and economic crime cases can be prosecuted within five months, compared to the prolonged delays previously experienced.

Through Operation Asset Recovery, Government has achieved the largest recovery of assets in Zambia's history.

Recovered assets include real estate, vehicles, helicopters and cash, all of which are being returned to the rightful owners — the citizens of Zambia.

We are walking the talk, but we recognise that much work still lies ahead.

We will continue fighting corruption — past, present and future.

If you are corrupt, you are on your own.

It is immoral to support corruption or those involved in corrupt practices.

Madam Speaker,

We remain determined to ensure that all those entrusted with public resources act responsibly and in the best interests of citizens.

We will continue addressing institutional and structural weaknesses to further strengthen governance and integrity.

Honest business must become easier and more rewarding than corruption.

Sustainable Development

Madam Speaker,

Government has positioned Zambia on a green growth trajectory.

Over the past four years, we have intensified climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, upgraded climate monitoring stations and strengthened early warning systems.

These efforts are helping build resilience in agriculture and other sectors while protecting farmers and communities.

Madam Speaker,

Deforestation remains a major challenge.

Government is therefore promoting natural regeneration, tree planting and alternative energy sources.

We are also strengthening the sustainable management of wildlife, rivers, forests and wetlands.

The amount of forest land under community management increased from 4.1 million hectares in 2022 to 10.4 million hectares in 2025.

We call upon traditional leaders, civic leaders, the Church, civil society and communities to support Government's efforts to safeguard our forests.

Madam Speaker,

The Keep Zambia Clean, Green and Healthy Campaign remains vital in promoting behavioural change and public health.

We urge citizens and institutions alike to prioritise environmental cleanliness in order to prevent diseases such as cholera.

Indeed, prevention is better than cure.

Madam Speaker,

While increased investment in mining has created jobs and opportunities, it has also introduced environmental and social challenges.

Government is strengthening the regulatory framework to promote safe, secure, legal and sustainable mining practices.

We must ensure that the extraction of our natural resources does not become a source of instability or environmental destruction.

Madam Speaker,

Sustainable development can only thrive where peace and hard work are rewarded by prosperity.

The Kwacha has become one of the best-performing currencies in the world, inflation is declining and economic fundamentals continue to improve.

At the same time, we acknowledge that many citizens are yet to fully experience these benefits and that the cost of living remains high.

However, with macroeconomic stability now firmly established, citizens will increasingly begin to feel the benefits through gradual but sustained improvements in living standards.

As Government works to improve wages, we will continue working with the private sector to reduce the cost of doing business and stabilise prices.

We commend the Zambia Association of Manufacturers for responding positively by reducing prices and encourage others to do the same.

Conclusion

Madam Speaker,

National values and principles embody who we are as a people.

Our national character and policy direction remain firmly anchored on these principles.

While we have made tremendous progress together, we acknowledge that there is still more work to be done.

We all have a duty to translate these national values into action from a place of love and genuine care for our people and our country.

Madam Speaker,

This year, on Thursday, 13th August 2026, Zambia will hold General Elections.

We therefore urge every Zambian to uphold the highest standards of patriotism, integrity and peaceful coexistence before, during and after the elections.

We must reject all forms of violence, hate speech, cybercrime and divisive politics.

These vices have no place in our society.

We call upon all political actors, candidates, supporters, civil society, the Church, traditional leaders, students, youths, the media and all citizens to demonstrate restraint, responsibility and respect as we head to the polls.

Madam Speaker,

We call upon every citizen to contribute towards greater national unity and development as we reaffirm our commitment to delivering for the people and moving Zambia forward together.

Let us remain guided by our enduring national principle:

“One Zambia, One Nation, One People.”

Madam Speaker,

We love our people, we care about our people and we remain focused on improving their wellbeing through service delivery.

May the good Lord bless us all.

May the good Lord bless us with continued peace, security, stability and prosperity.

May the good Lord bless our beautiful country, Zambia.

Madam Speaker,

We thank you for your kind attention.