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HAKAINDE HICHILEMA — 7TH PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

Speech During the Official Opening of the Third Session of the Thirteenth National Assembly

Date: 08 September 2023

Location: National Assembly, Lusaka, Zambia

Occasion: Opening of the Third Session of the Thirteenth National Assembly

Madam Speaker,

President Hichilema delivered this address on 8 September 2023 to mark the opening of the Third Session of the Thirteenth National Assembly. The speech reviewed progress made in his administration's second year in office and outlined priorities for the coming year.

On the economy, the President outlined progress in economic recovery, improvement of health delivery services, poverty reduction and job creation. He called for unity and cooperation among Zambians to ensure the country moves forward.

On debt restructuring, President Hichilema reported a significant breakthrough — the conclusion of a debt restructuring agreement with official creditors under the G20 Common Framework. The agreement rescheduled debt repayments by more than twelve years and reduced interest rates to concessional levels for fourteen years. He thanked the Official Creditor Committee, co-chaired by China and France, with South Africa as vice-chair, describing the achievement as one that had previously seemed a mission impossible.

On agriculture, he reported increased production across key crops. The country exported honey and fresh cut flowers to the European Union in growing volumes, with around 1,215 metric tonnes of fresh cut flowers exported in the first half of 2023, compared to 853 metric tonnes in 2022. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting small-scale farmers through mechanisation, irrigation, and the recruitment of frontline agricultural staff.

On mining, the President acknowledged ongoing negotiations over Konkola and Mopani Copper Mines, stating that the government believes it should not mine in court but at the mines, and reaffirmed its commitment to discouraging excessive litigation in the sector.

The President also noted that Zambia had been named among the top three most democratising countries in the world by V-Dem, and highlighted the passage of the Access to Information Act in 2023 as a milestone in promoting transparency and accountability.