



OPENING REMARKS

By

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DELIVERED AT THE

LAUNCH OF THE 2024 MID-YEAR SOCIAL SECTOR

BUDGET PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18TH, 2024

LUSAKA

[PROTOCOLS]

THE GUEST OF HONOR, DR GEORGE SINYANGWE,

(REPRESENTATIVE - DR. TAMBATAMBA – PUBLIC HEALTH)

OUR PARTNERS FROM THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN’S FUND (UNICEF),

SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS PRESENT,

REPRESENTATIVES FROM COOPERATING PARTNERS,

THE MEDIA PRESENT,

DISTINGUISHED INVITED GUESTS,

MAY I SIMPLY SAY ALL PROTOCOLS OBSERVED

ON BEHALF OF THE ZAMBIA INSTITUTE FOR POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH (ZIPAR), IT IS AN HONOR TO WELCOME YOU ALL TO THE LAUNCH OF THE 2024 MID-YEAR SOCIAL SECTOR BUDGET PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

WE’VE HAD A FEW ROUGH YEARS—COVID SHOOK US, EXTERNAL DEBT KEPT US ON OUR TOES, CHOLERA CAME KNOCKING IN 2023 AND 2024, AND JUST WHEN WE THOUGHT IT COULDN’T GET WORSE, A DROUGHT SWEPT IN, AFFECTING HALF THE POPULATION AND LEAVING 6 MILLION PEOPLE IN CRITICAL FOOD INSECURITY CONDITIONS. LET’S JUST SAY, MOTHER NATURE HASN’T BEEN IN OUR CORNER.

HOWEVER, ZAMBIA HAS PERSISTED ON A PATH TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY.

THE GOOD NEWS IS,

THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS PARTNERS HAVE RESPONDED SWIFTLY, WITH INITIATIVES LIKE THE DROUGHT RESPONSE PLAN, AIMED AT RAISING NECESSARY RESOURCES TO SUPPORT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES AND MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS.

THIS BUDGET PERFORMANCE EVALUATION REPORT, THOUGH WE WOULD HAVE LOVED IT COME SOONER, HAS BEEN LAUNCHED AT A CRITICAL MOMENT IN THE PLANNING CYCLE OF THIS NATION. IT WILL HELP PREPARE FOR THE HIGH CHOLERA RISK PERIODS AHEAD AND AT THE SAME TIME, SHAPE OUR 2025 BUDGET EXPECTATIONS.

TODAY,

WE ARE NOT JUST REVIEWING THE MID-YEAR BUDGET PERFORMANCE: WE ARE LOOKING AHEAD – WORKING TOGETHER TO STRENGTHEN OUR SOCIAL SECTOR AMIDST THESE CHALLENGES.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

LET'S ACKNOWLEDGE,

THE GOVERNMENT'S BOLD ECONOMIC REFORMS. DESPITE THE MANY CHALLENGES, THERE'S BEEN SOLID PROGRESS IN FISCAL PRUDENCE AND MACROECONOMIC STABILITY, THOUGH ISSUES LIKE EXCHANGE RATES AND INFLATION REMAIN. WE'RE ALSO HOPEFUL THE REMAINING EXTERNAL DEBT TO PRIVATE LENDERS WILL SOON BE RESOLVED.

GUEST OF HONOUR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

WE BEGAN PREPERATIONS FOR 2024 WITH OPTIMISM, FORECASTING REAL GDP GROWTH OF 4.7%. NONETHELESS, THE SEVERE DROUGHT, DECLARED A DISASATSTER, FORCED A DOWNWARD REVISION OF GROWTH PROJECTIONS TO 2.3%. THIS DROUGHT HAS HIT ALL SECTORS, ESPECIALLY AGRICULTURAL AND ENERGY, AND CAUSED A REVENUE SHORTFALL IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2024, THUS INTENSIFYING THE ALREADY FORMIDABLE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES.

YET, YET, THE GOVERNMENT'S FOCUS ON PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE THROUGH SOCIAL PROGRAMS REMAINS STRONG AND ACTUALLY, COMMENDABLE.

A KEY HIGHLIGHT,

IS THE K41.9 BILLION SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET, TARGETING EMERGENCY RELIEF FOR 2.5 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS. THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO BALANCE CRISIS MANAGEMENT WITH FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY IS ADMIRABLE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

THE OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS INCLUDING THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN ZAMBIA, THE WORLD BANK, THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND, NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS, AND VARIOUS HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS IS COMMENDABLE. WITHOUT THEM, THINGS WOULD BE FAR WORSE. THIS SOLIDARITY HAS MADE A REAL DIFFERENCE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

AS WE REFLECT ON THIS REPORT,

IT IS CLEAR THAT THE ROAD AHEAD WILL NOT BE EASY. BUT WITH THE MEASURE BEING IMPLEMENTED, THERE IS REASON TO REMAIN OPTIMISTIC ABOUT ZAMBIA'S ECONOMIC OUTLOOK.

THIS REPORT PROVIDES A CLEAR FOUNDATION OF UNDERSTANDING WHERE WE ARE AND TO NAVIGATE THE REST OF THE YEAR AND BEYOND. MOST IMPORTANTLY, THROUGH EVIDENCE-BASED DIALOGUE, WE ARE BETTER PREPARED TO SUPPORT ZAMBIA'S RECOVERY WHILE ENSURING OUR MOST VULNERABLE CITIZENS ARE SOCIALLY PROTECTED.

IN CLOSING,

I WOULD LIKE TO REITERATE ZIPAR'S UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO PROVIDING EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS TO SUPPORT OUR COUNTRY'S ONGOING RECOVERY EFFORTS. WE ARE GRATEFUL TO ALL THE PARTNERS THAT HAVE JOINED HANDS WITH US TO MAKE THIS A REALITY.

I THANK YOU.