



Republic of Zambia

STATEMENT BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. EDGAR CHAGWA
LUNGU,**

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
ZAMBIA**

ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WEDNESDAY, 25TH MARCH, 2020

STATE HOUSE

COUNTRYMEN AND WOMEN,

THE WORLD TODAY FACES ONE OF ITS GREATEST ADVERSARIES THAT THREATENS MANKIND. THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE. THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE, ALSO CALLED COVID-19 HAS DECIMATED LIVES ACROSS THE WORLD.

COUNTRYMEN AND WOMEN,

THIS VIRUS IS MEAN, DEVASTATING AND MORBID. A FEW WEEKS AGO, IT WAS HEARD FROM A DISTANCE IN CHINA; TODAY IT IS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. TODAY, YOU AND I ARE NOT SAFE ANYMORE AND UNTIL WE COMPLY WITH WHAT THE HEALTH AUTHORITIES ARE SAYING, IT MAY SPREAD QUICKLY AND ENDANGER OUR LIVES.

COUNTRYMEN AND WOMEN,

ZAMBIA IS LANDLOCKED; AND THAT MEANS, WITH A CRISIS OF THIS MAGNITUDE, WE SHALL FIND OURSELVES UNDER FORCED LOCKDOWN IF ALL OUR NEIGHBOURS CLOSE THEIR BORDERS. THIS SITUATION WOULD MAKE US ECONOMICALLY VULNERABLE AND WEAKER.

IN COMING UP WITH MEASURES TO STEM THE SPREAD OF COVID-19, MY GOVERNMENT HAS DEVISED A PHASED STRATEGY THAT WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION INTERVENTIONS FOR THE LOW AND HIGH INCOME GROUPS, LOW AND HIGH DENSITY AREAS, RURAL AND URBAN AREAS. IT IS WITH THIS IN MIND THAT ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES DEALING IN GOODS AND SERVICES WILL BE KEPT RUNNING.

COUNTRYMEN AND WOMEN,

I HAVE GONE ROUND THE CITY AND I HAVE SEEN FOR MYSELF THAT MANY AMONG US ARE NOT TAKING THIS COVID-19 SERIOUSLY. I HAVE SEEN MULTITUDES PATRONISING BARS OR FREELY, HUGGING AND SHAKING HANDS AT FUNERALS, CONTRARY TO HEALTH ADVISE.

LET ME SAY THIS; IF YOUR LIFESTYLE HAS NOT CHANGED IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS, THEN YOU ARE DOING SOMETHING WRONG AND ENDANGERING BOTH YOURSELF, YOUR NEIGHBOUR AND YOUR LOVED ONES.

COUNTRYMEN AND WOMEN,

IT IS THE DUTY OF MY GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE EVERY ZAMBIAN IS PROTECTED FROM THIS DISEASE. MY GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TAKING PROACTIVE MEASURES EVEN BEFORE THE CURRENT CASES WERE IDENTIFIED AND PRONOUNCED. I WENT AHEAD AND DIRECTED THAT SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES BE CLOSED PREMATURELY TO PROTECT PUPILS AND STUDENTS; TEACHERS AND LECTURERS.

EXACTLY NINE DAYS AFTER THE FIRST TWO COVID-19 CASES WERE ANNOUNCED, TEN MORE CASES HAVE NOW BEEN IDENTIFIED BRINGING THE NUMBER TO TWELVE. ELEVEN OF THEM HAD TRAVELLED ABROAD IN RECENT WEEKS AND ACQUIRED THE DISEASE FROM OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY.

ONE HAD COME INTO CONTACT WITH THEM LOCALLY, AND THEY HAVE ALL BEEN QUARANTINED.

COUNTRYMEN AND WOMEN,

YOU ARE ALL AWARE THAT, MY CABINET HAS ALREADY APPROVED THE COVID-19 CONTINGENCY PLAN, INCLUDING ITS BUDGET AND DIRECTED THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE TO MOBILISE RESOURCES TO ENABLE LINE MINISTRIES, PRIVATE SECTOR AND OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO CONTAIN AND COMBAT THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE IN A MULTISECTORAL AND COORDINATED MANNER.

COUNTRYMEN AND WOMEN,

LET ME NOW STATE THE MEASURES MY GOVERNMENT HAS STARTED UNDERTAKING AND WILL CONTINUE TO UNDERTAKE IN PHASE ONE TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19:

1. THE ZAMBIAN MISSIONS ABROAD AND DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION MUST BE ALERT TO REVIEW THE ISSUANCE OF VISAS FOR PEOPLE WANTING TO TRAVEL TO ZAMBIA, AS WELL AS AT ALL PORTS OF ENTRY INTO THE COUNTRY FOR ALL TRAVELLERS FROM COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY COVID-19;

2. TRAVELLERS WILL BE ALLOWED ENTRY INTO ZAMBIA, HOWEVER, UPON SCREENING THOSE WHO EXHIBIT SYMPTOMS THEY WILL BE QUARANTINED IN A MEDICAL FACILITY FOR TREATMENT,

WHILE ALL OTHER TRAVELLERS WITHOUT SYMPTOMS WILL BE QUARANTINED FOR AT LEAST 14 DAYS AT THEIR OWN COST;

3. GOVERNMENT HAS SUSPENDED NON-ESSENTIAL FOREIGN TRAVEL, PARTICULARLY, TO COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASES;

4. PUBLIC GATHERINGS SUCH AS CONFERENCES, WEDDINGS, FUNERALS, FESTIVALS ARE TO BE RESTRICTED TO AT LEAST 50 PEOPLE SUBJECT TO THEM COMPLYING WITH PUBLIC HEALTH AUTHORITY GUIDELINES;

5. RESTAURANTS MUST OPERATE ONLY ON A TAKE-AWAY AND DELIVERY BASIS;

6. ALL BARS, NIGHT CLUBS, CINEMAS, GYMS AND CASINOS MUST CLOSE;

7. ALL INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS TO AND FROM HARRY MWAANGA NKUMBULA, SIMON MWANSA KAPWEPWE AND MFUWE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS ARE SUSPENDED, INSTEAD, ALL INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS SHOULD LAND AT AND DEPART FROM KENNETH KAUNDA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ONLY, TO ENSURE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE SCREENING OF TRAVELLERS, AS WELL AS FOLLOWING THEM UP BY OUR HEALTH AUTHORITIES;

COUNTRYMEN AND WOMEN,

THE MEASURES I HAVE JUST ANNOUNCED SHALL BE EFFECTED FROM MIDNIGHT ON THURSDAY 26TH MARCH, 2020 AND SHALL BE OBSERVED FOR THE INITIAL PERIOD OF 14 DAYS. HOWEVER MY GOVERNMENT SHALL CONSTANTLY REVIEW THESE MEASURES DEPENDING ON HOW THE PANDEMIC EVOLVES.

I WILL AT AN OPPORTUNE TIME PROVIDE FURTHER UPDATE AND GUIDANCE ON THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE AND GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUED RESPONSE. IN THE MEANTIME, THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT SHALL BE PROVIDING REGULAR UPDATES PERIODICALLY.

COUNTRYMEN AND WOMEN,

I KNOW THERE WILL BE A SIGNIFICANT NEGATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT TO OUR COMMUNITIES AND THE COUNTRY AT LARGE. THEREFORE, ALL THESE MEASURES ARE CRITICAL TO ENSURING THAT WE AVERT AN IMMINENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HEALTH CRISIS.

COUNTRYMEN AND WOMEN,

LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK THE DONOR COMMUNITY, BUSINESS HOUSES, NGOs, TRADITIONAL LEADERS, THE CHURCH AND CITIZENS FOR ACTIVELY SUPPORTING AND WORKING WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN ADDRESSING AND MITIGATING THIS PANDEMIC AT VARIOUS LEVELS.

REMEMBER, WE ARE AT WAR, A PUBLIC HEALTH WAR AGAINST COVID-19 WHERE EVERYONE MUST STAND UP AND BE COUNTED. THE HEALTH GUIDELINES OF FREQUENTLY WASHING HANDS, SANITISING, CLEANING OUR ENVIRONMENT, NOT SHAKING HANDS AND OBSERVING SOCIAL DISTANCE FROM EACH OTHER ARE KEY TO OUR SURVIVAL.

THIS FIGHT CANNOT BE WON WITHOUT COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION. LET US BE EACH OTHER'S BROTHER AND SISTERS KEEPER AND ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION WHENEVER ONE FEELS UNWELL AND EXHIBITS FLU LIKE SYMPTOMS.

I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT, TOGETHER, WE SHALL FIGHT AND CONQUER THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE IN ZAMBIA.

I THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU ALL.