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HAKAINDE HICHILEMA — 7TH PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

Address to the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

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Occasion: 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

Your Excellency, Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly;

Your Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations;

Your Excellencies heads of state and government;

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

I wish to begin by congratulating Your Excellency Mr. Abdulla Shahid, on your election as President of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I am confident that your wealth of knowledge and vast experience in multilateral issues will lead to a successful discharge of the important responsibilities of the assembly throughout this session. Zambia stands ready to work with you as you execute your mandate in presiding over the matters of this session.

Mr. President,

I have the distinct honour to deliver my maiden speech as the 7th President of the Republic of Zambia following the electoral victory of our United Party for National Development (UPND) in the presidential and general elections that were held on 12th August, 2021.

I am pleased to inform this august house that the people of the republic of Zambia once again rose to the occasion to usher in a new government through a peaceful election. This has enabled Zambia to further consolidate her democratic credentials, which serves as an inspiration on the African continent, where the outcome of an election is determined by those who vote and not those who count the votes. We are therefore proud to provide leadership in our country where people aspire for a free and just society and where they aspire for their voices to be heard.

Mr. President,

We were able to achieve this political transformation even at the time when Zambia was grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the midst of deep sorrow following the passing on of our founding father and first republican president, Dr. Kenneth David Kaunda.

I therefore wish to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Zambian people, to pay tribute to this iconic leader who was fondly known as K.K. It is without doubt that the last remaining steward of liberation struggles has left an indelible mark on humanity. Dr. Kaunda's principles, values and contributions towards the ideals of emancipation and independence did not only spread across the African continent, but across the entire globe. His untold devotion to peace and unity laid the very foundation for Zambia's stature as a beacon of peace, not only in southern Africa, but the African continent as a whole. The Zambian government will therefore, build upon KK's profound legacy to live in peace and harmony with one another. As we work towards this year's theme let us remember the important

lessons that Dr. Kaunda taught us, especially as we work towards revitalizing the UN system.

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a far reaching socio-economic impact globally, including, disturbing trade flows, supply chains and various economic activities. In addition to loss of lives, the pandemic increased poverty levels through job losses, stressed healthcare systems and worse still, the delivery of education to learners. Disruption to the education systems, particularly in developing countries, was in part, due to inadequate information, communication and technology (ICT) facilities.

In response to the pandemic, Zambia has developed a national preparedness and response plan for COVID-19, which has been used to guide the implementation of mitigation measures for the pandemic. The vaccine programme forms an integral part of the response plan. Despite our placing the vaccine program high on the list of mitigation measures, Zambia has only managed to vaccinate about 3% of its population. This is against the country's target of vaccinating 70% of the eligible population by the third quarter of 2022. This clearly highlights the inequitable access to vaccines in developing countries, especially that more than 2 billion vaccines have been administered worldwide.

It is fair to state that recovery from the pandemic hinges upon mass vaccinations before considering other reforms or facilities that tend to fail when countries lock-down their economies. It is, therefore, gratifying that this session of the General Assembly will consider building on initiatives such as the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust (AVAT) and COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX). The two initiatives have made it possible for low-income countries, such as Zambia, to access the life-saving vaccines, which will contribute to building resilience and recovery from the pandemic.

I wish, therefore, to express Zambia's appreciation for the support that has been provided thus far through the COVAX and AVAT facilities, the UN system and various stakeholders. To further guarantee resilience, we call for concerted and enhanced global efforts towards promoting investments particularly in local manufacturing capacity and technology transfer on vaccines, related infrastructure, human capital as well as research and development.

Mr. President,

The new administration in Zambia is cognisant that a conducive governance environment is a precursor for the country's political stability, security, economic growth and sustainable development. It also fosters enhanced transparency, accountability and consultative dialogue. With this realisation, our administration will work towards strengthening of oversight and governance institutions and ensure the independence and autonomy of the three arms of government, particularly the legislature and judiciary.

The fight against corruption will be at the centre of our transformation agenda and this shall be executed with zero-tolerance. We shall also promote free media and an active civil society as they are critical in upholding checks and balances, human rights, liberties and freedoms.

Mr. President,

My government's high priority is to restore macroeconomic stability; attain fiscal and debt sustainability; promote economic growth, enhance economic diversification and manage the contraction of debt. I am confident that these measures will restore macro-economic stability and put the country back on economic recovery.

To sustain this growth, Zambia will dedicate efforts to guarantee a stable and predictable environment that will attract and protect local, regional and foreign direct investment as well as enhance local participation in the economy. This is a prerequisite for a vibrant private

sector led economy and thus create jobs and opportunities for everyone.

To complement these efforts, Zambia has embarked on an ambitious economic and social transformation agenda with a view to creating equitable opportunities and poverty reduction for the Zambian people, especially the youth and women. In order to achieve this goal, our administration shall design and implement interventions aimed at inducing enhanced productivity in agriculture, mining, energy, financial services, tourism, technology, health and education as well as support the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises.

Mr. President,

Zambia is aware of the critical role of the United Nations in guiding the world to focus on the sustainable development agenda. In particular, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has set the tone and benchmarks for countries to incorporate sustainability in their development policies.

Our "New Dawn Government" in Zambia is committed to realising tangible growth and sustainable development while paying particular attention so that this is not achieved at the expense of future generations. Like many other developing countries, Zambia calls for closer cooperation and support for capacity to adopt better, safer, climate change sensitive and modern methods of increased production and productivity.

Our administration has established a ministry that is the first of its kind in Zambia, the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment, to address this, among other important issues concerning environmental sustainability. This will be crucial to build the ability for implementing climate positive actions.

Mr. President,

Zambia will, therefore, continue to support national, regional and international initiatives aimed at promoting peace and security. In this vein, Zambia reaffirms its commitment to play an active role in the SADC mission in Mozambique aimed at restoring peace to the Cabo Delgado Province.

In addition, Zambia remains committed to the cause of the Lusaka Master Roadmap to silence the guns in Africa, an initiative being implemented by all African Union (AU) member states to promote peace and security, which has since been endorsed for extension for a 10-year period from 2021 to 2030. We therefore, wish to call for continued support of the United Nations in silencing the guns in Africa and other continental initiatives.

In the quest for promoting global peace and security, Zambia notes, with satisfaction, the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which became operative on 22nd January 2021. The entry into force of the TPNW is a tangible feat towards advancing the cause of nuclear disarmament on the international stage. Zambia encourages other states that are yet to ratify the TPNW to come on board so that we can continue making advances towards achieving our aspirations of eradicating nuclear weapons.

On the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reform, Zambia is still concerned with the slow pace of negotiations which have continued without making much progress. Zambia, in this regard, wishes to reiterate the African common position, the "Ezulwini Consensus", that calls for a more representative and democratic United Nations Security Council, in which Africa, like all other world regions, will be fairly represented.

Mr. President,

The call for gender equality is now a century-old struggle for women to participate equally with men in society. Despite the realization that women's full and effective participation in all areas of life results in prosperity, women are still, however, involved less in public life and decision-making.

It is important that we continue to demand for the promotion of gender equality while paying particular attention to the rights of women, girls, children, and the rights of people living with disabilities. For us in Zambia, we will remain committed to the advancement and promotion of women's rights, and for the first time in the history of our country, our new parliament elected the first female speaker to preside over Zambia's supreme law making organ of government. I further wish to state with pride that Zambia's vice president, as well as the deputy speaker of the house are women.

Mr. President,

As I conclude, I wish to emphasize that it is the duty and responsibility of all of us in the global democratic community, to make democracy work for our people. We can do this by delivering democracy dividends through accelerating economic development, balanced distribution of resources and our people accessing opportunities for a better life.

This is what will make democracy attractive to our people in the individual countries. This is what will make democracy sustainable and keep away autocratic and heavy handed alternatives from leadership. This is what will foster a peaceful, prosperous and a more united world.

Thank you for your attention.