



## HH Presidential Archive

HAKAINDE HICHILEMA — 7TH PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

# Maiden Address of President Hakainde Hichilema: 76th UN General Assembly

**Date:** 21 September 2021

**Location:** New York, USA

**Occasion:** 76th 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 to work with you as you execute your mandate in presiding over the matters of this session.

To the outgoing President, His Excellency Mr. Volkan Bozkır, I wish to convey Zambia's appreciation for your commendable service to the United Nations family during the 75th session.

Mr. President, I have the distinct honor to deliver my maiden speech as the seventh 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 the 12th of August, 2021.

I am pleased to inform this august house that the people 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 our democratic credentials, which serves as an inspiration to the African continent—where the outcome of our election was determined by those who vote and not those who count votes. Very important.

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 people of Zambia to pay tribute to this icon leader who was fondly known in our country and elsewhere as KK.

It is without doubt that the last remaining stalwart 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 on 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 socioeconomic 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.

In response to the pandemic, Zambia has developed a National Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19. Despite our placing the vaccine program high on the list of mitigation measures, Zambia has only managed to vaccinate a mere 3 percent of its population. This clearly highlights the inequitable access to vaccines. It is fair to state that recovery from the pandemic hinges upon mass vaccinations.

Mr. President, the new administration in Zambia is cognizant that a conducive governance environment is a precursor for the country's political stability, security, economic growth, and sustainable development. With this realization, our administration will work towards strengthening of oversight governance institutions and ensure the independence and autonomy of the three arms of government, particularly the legislature and the judiciary.

The fight against corruption will be at the center of our transformation agenda and this shall be executed with zero tolerance—zero tolerance to corruption. 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.

Zambia has embarked on an ambitious economic and social transformation agenda with a view to creating equitable opportunities and poverty reduction, especially for the youth and the women who actually delivered our election victory. We shall design and implement interventions aimed at inducing enhanced productivity in agriculture, mining, energy, financial services, tourism, technology, health, and education.

Mr. President, our "New Dawn" government is committed to realizing tangible growth while paying particular attention so that this is not achieved at the expense of future generations. Our administration has established a ministry that is the first of its kind in Zambia: the Ministry of Green Economy and the Environment.

Mr. President, I am drawn to the prophetic inscription on the wall of the United Nations plaza: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4-5). These words serve as a reminder to the United Nations to work towards global peace.

The foundation to sustainable economic growth and development is peace and stability. Zambia will, therefore, continue to support national, regional, and international initiatives. In this vein, Zambia reaffirms its commitment to play an active role in the SADC mission in Mozambique and remains committed to the Lusaka Master Roadmap to Silence the Guns in Africa.

On the United Nations Security Council reform, Zambia wishes to reiterate the African common position—the Ezulwini Consensus—that calls for a more representative and democratic Security Council in which Africa will be fairly represented.

Mr. President, for the first time in the history of our country, our new parliament has elected the first female Speaker of the National Assembly. I further wish to state with pride that Zambia's Vice President, as well as the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, are both 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 all our people. We can do this by delivering democracy dividends through accelerating economic development and balanced distribution of resources. This is what will make democracy sustainable and keep away autocratic and heavy-handed alternatives from leadership.

Mr. President, Heads of Government and State, I thank you for your attention.