



Republic of Zambia

**INTERVENTION STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA DURING THE
AFRICAN REGION REVIEW MEETING ON PROGRESS MADE ON THE
ISTANBUL PLAN OF ACTION, 22ND FEBRUARY 2021**

Mr. Chairperson, Your Excellencies,

The delegation of the Republic of Zambia wishes to begin by thanking the Government of the Republic of Malawi and the United Nations Office of the High Representative on Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developed Countries and Small Island States and other partners for finally being able to convene this meeting that was originally scheduled to be held in March 2020.

It is gratifying to note that there is still momentum on the programme for LDCs. The African region, indeed, remains resolute in its agenda to forge ahead and attain the aspirations that were set for the period of the Istanbul Programme of Action and to forge ahead to better development results over the next decade. Equally gratifying is the framework and support mechanisms that have been put in place by our collective effort to ensure that the goals of the LDC programmes of action are attained.

I thank you chairperson for the able manner in which you are coordinating the proceedings of this session.

Your Excellencies,

The decade ended on a difficult note as the world continues to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic that has negatively impacted economic activity at the global, continental, and national levels.

The review of our joint efforts in the last decade 2011–2020 shows that three LDCs, representing 4.7 percent, have graduated, while five are expected to graduate within the first 4 years of implementing the new Agenda. This shows that certainly, there is

progress, though slower than recorded in the previous programme of action where 6.6 percent of LDCs graduated.

There is need to accelerate development efforts so that more LDCs can record progress. As a group, a number of areas still require our concerted effort. These include persistent poverty among the 13 percent of the global population that reside in our communities; little progress with regard to structural transformation; modest progress in education and skills development; and less than desirable improvements in health indicators such as maternal mortality. Further, performance has been exacerbated by factors such as droughts and the COVID 19 pandemic.

Your Excellencies,

In the case of Zambia, as the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action comes to an end, the country has made progress with notable achievements.

The country undertook investment in infrastructure development in the social and economic sectors. Electricity generation increased by about 70 percent from 1,767 Megawatts (MW) in 2011 to 3,000 MW in 2020, contributing to improved access to electricity. Investment in the communications sector resulted in improved mobile subscriptions from 11.6 million in 2011 to 15.8 million in 2018. Internet subscription also increased from 5.2 million in 2016 to 9.9 million in 2018.

This increase in mobile and internet connectivity has contributed to increased access to information, as well as financial inclusion. For instance, the volumes and values of mobile money transactions increased significantly from 17 million transactions valued at an equivalent of 55.2 million united states dollars in 2012 to 750.5 million transactions valued at an equivalent of USD5 billion united states dollars in 2020, respectively.

Your Excellencies,

In the area of Human Development, Zambia recorded improvements in access to education due to public and private infrastructure investments for primary and secondary education. Between 2011 and 2019, the number of primary schools country-wide increased from 8,362 to 9,282, while secondary schools increased from

631 to 1,288. This has contributed to improvement in literacy levels for persons aged 15 and above from 83 percent in 2010 to 87 percent in 2018.

To increase quality and bring healthcare services closer to the people, over 500 health facilities were constructed during the review period. This contributed to the reduction in overall maternal mortality ratio from 398 to 278 deaths for every 100,000 live births between 2014 and 2018. Under-five mortality rate also reduced from 75 per 1,000 live births in 2014 to 61 per 1,000 live births in 2018. Reductions were also recorded in stunting, wasting and underweight children under the age of five. Further, 93 percent of people living with HIV were on anti-retroviral therapy by 2019.

To reduce vulnerability, the country embarked on implementation of social protection programmes and increased the number of households benefitting from the Social Cash Transfer Programme by more than eleven-fold, from 51,106 in 2012 to 632,327 households in 2020.

Your Excellencies,

I wish to indicate that in spite of the gains recorded, Zambia was not spared from the effects of climate change, and more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, we are currently implementing an economic recovery programme from 2020 to 2023 as we formulate the 8th National Development Plan that will run from 2022 to 2026.

For Zambia, the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action has presented a number of lessons that should inform our way forward. These are as follows:

- (a) Investing in people is indispensable. Without notable improvement in human development indicators, LDCs will find it difficult to advance.
- (b) Structural transformation is a daunting, yet necessary task that needs relentless commitment at all levels. There is need to address structural challenges that inhibit productivity improvement across sectors that can absorb labour and contribute to economic growth.
- (c) Climate change can potentially undermine the development gains attained. And therefore, there is need for decisive and consistent responses to climate change in development interventions.
- (d) The public sector needs to create a conducive environment for the private

sector to grow. It is the private sector that will undertake most of the economic activities that will contribute to the desired growth, including the most sought-after jobs for the population.

- (e) Good governance is indispensable not only for internal and international credibility, but also in providing a sound base for delivery of development results; and
- (f) Development and growth are not real unless and until they impact on, and improve, the lives of our people. Addressing developmental inequality is, therefore, critical.

Your Excellencies,

In view of the lessons learned, there is need for the next agenda to make economic diversification a priority. The next agenda should also strive to effectively address youth unemployment and promote education and skills development in order to position LDCs to harness the demographic dividend. Universal health coverage coupled with strengthening of health systems should continue to be an important goal. We also need to enhance the role and participation of women in our economies as this will lead to multiple development gains in different sectors. Lastly, but not the least, the Agenda should emphasise the need to adapt and build resilience to climate change.

Your Excellencies,

Zambia remains committed to advancing the development of the country and will ensure the mainstreaming of LDC Programmes of Action at national level. As we formulate our 8th National Development Plan, that should run from 2022 to 2026, the deliberations of this conference and subsequent programmes of action will inform our national development plan.

We look to continued support from all our partners in advancing the development efforts of least developed countries. I am confident that our concerted efforts will enable us to achieve our desired goals.

I thank you, Mr. Chairperson and Your Excellencies!