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President Mugabe's Speech at the Opening of the Second Session of the Sixth Parliament of Zimbabwe in Harare

Madame President of the Senate,

Mr Speaker, Sir,

Senators,

Members of the House of Assembly.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the start of the Second Session of the Sixth Parliament of Zimbabwe.

This Session takes place against the background of our home-grown and defining legislative developments which, apart from placing our Land Reform Programme on a firm pedestal, have also re-introduced the bi-cameral Parliamentary system. Our Upper House of Parliament, the Senate, is now firmly in place.

Following the passing of Constitutional Amendment Number 17, women are now empowered to own land alongside their male counterparts, while through their representation in the Senate, the country has already attained the 30 percent SADC quota for women in politics. I wish to reiterate my challenge

to those elected as members of the Senate to work hard to fulfil the expectations of the electorate and the Nation.

Madame President, Mr Speaker Sir,

While we had made significant progress in containing the country's number one enemy, inflation, its current resurgence and the distortions it causes in our everyday lives present a worrisome development. Notwithstanding this setback, Government remains fully determined to tame the monster, a task which no doubt requires our collective will as stakeholders in the country's well-being. I wish to applaud the close collaboration between Government and Business which has underpinned the implementation of our nascent National Economic Development Priority Programme (NEDPP), which focuses on stabilising the economy, ensuring national food security, and improving foreign currency generation. Further, the programme emphasises the importance of import substitution and value-addition as we redouble our efforts at promoting investment. Thus, the prevailing sense of a shared vision should forever remain as the mortar that binds us together and the force that propels us to greater heights in pursuit of national development.

It is pleasing to note that, as a Nation and indeed as a region, we have this year experienced a vastly improved rainfall season. This welcome occurrence has set the stage for a strong rebound of the agriculture sector which had been hard hit by successive droughts over the past few years. This development bodes well for our sectoral economic turnaround strategies which are firmly anchored on the agricultural sector. Attention should continuously shift

towards clearing impediments to optimal productivity in the agricultural sector. These include adequate and timely resource mobilisation as well as security of tenure and stability on the farms, issues of commodity pricing, production and farmer support programmes.

On this inputs supply front, Government is already working closely with suppliers in an effort to boost the provision of critical inputs while, on the basis of the 99-year leases to be issued in due course, and in the context of the recently approved contract farming framework, the corporate sector should now play a more expanded role in guaranteeing increased production. On the issue of disruptions on farms, I wish to make it crystal clear that Government will not hesitate to deal firmly with all cases of indiscipline on the farms. To ensure the attainment of optimum productivity, our farmers should be equipped with the appropriate knowledge and skills. In line with this thrust, Government has increased the number of agricultural colleges to eleven with the addition of Magamba, Chaminuka, Mushagashe and Kaguvi training centres. The first group of 337 agricultural apprentice candidates completed studies in April this year and are now ready for deployment, preferably in the agricultural extension services area where personnel levels have remained at 50 percent over a number of years. Government will continue to monitor commodity price movements and to engage stakeholders with a view to ensuring long-term viability of the sector.

The country has over the years continued to endure adverse terms of trade owing to reliance on the export of primary and semi-processed products. To address this unsavoury situation,

the ongoing implementation of the Industrialisation Policy will emphasise value-addition and import substitution. In light of this, Government, together with the private sector, will pursue strategies to boost capacity utilisation and product beneficiation. Already, Government is pursuing a strategic partnership, which should see the rehabilitation of and increased capacity utilisation at Zisco Steel.

Experiences on the international arena continue to testify to the role of the export sector as the flagship of any successful industrialisation programme. To this end, a comprehensive National Export Strategy, which should serve as the fulcrum of our industrialisation programme, will be launched soon. A revised Cotonou Agreement, which governs trade relations between African, Caribbean and the Pacific Group of States, and the European Union, will soon be brought to Parliament for ratification.

Sustained oil price increases, mainly triggered by geopolitical uncertainties in the global market, continue to impact negatively on efforts to restore stability in the fuel sub-sector. As a response, Government has adopted a policy of diversifying the sources of petroleum products in order to reduce dependence on conventional fossil fuels. It is in this context that the blending of petrol with ethanol is now set to resume, while work on the production of bio-diesel from jatropha, which is set to yield up to 10 percent of the national requirement, is already at an advanced stage.

In the power sector, Government is cognisant of the projected increased demand for electricity within the region and the possibilities of a regional power deficit next year. To

guarantee self-sufficiency, a programme for the expansion of local power generation capacity through the construction of new power stations as well as the revamping of existing ones will be embarked on. Furthermore, steps have been taken to rationalise ZESA's business units as a strategy to engender operational efficiency. To register the required impact, these initiatives have to be complemented by energy efficiency and conservation efforts by all the users.

The tourism sector remains an area of great promise in terms of opportunities for robust growth. To provide for co-ordinated planning and development of the sector, the National Tourism Policy will be introduced, while various instruments, including amendment of the Tourism Act shall be developed in order to operationalize this policy. The National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, in conjunction with the Rural Electrification Agency, is stepping up infrastructural development in the Gonarezhou National Park so as to maximise benefits accruing to the country from the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park initiative.

Challenges remain in the need to ensure sustainable use and effective management of the environment. These stem from the lack of adequate capacity to enforce adherence to legal environmental provisions by both individuals and institutions.

Measures to be taken to enhance that capacity will include the establishment of the National Environmental Council which will advise Government on all issues relating to environmental management.

Memoranda of Understanding on the Kavango-Zambezi and Limpopo-Shashe Teams Frontier Conservation Areas and an Agreement between Cooperazione E-Sviluppo Onlus (Cesvi) and the Government of Zimbabwe will also be brought before Parliament during this Session.

The current decline in the quality of our road infrastructure requires urgent attention. This assumes greater urgency when viewed against the spate of fatal accidents and the country's thrust towards realising its full potential as a communication hub in the region. To this end, Government is in the process of constructing toll plazas at entry and exit points of major towns as a means to boost revenue for the upgrading of the roads network. A Bill to transform the Department of Inland Waters into a Maritime Authority responsible for developing, regulating and licensing domestic inland water operations will also be brought before Parliament during this Session. As part of Government's on-going Public Sector Reform Programme and in line with the SADC Protocol on Transport, Communications and Meteorology, the Road Act shall be amended in the life of this Session to facilitate the transformation of the Department of Roads into an autonomous Roads and Ports Authority.

Madame President, Mr Speaker Sir,

In recent years, the critical role of Information and Communication Technologies as a catalyst for development has continued to grow. Our challenge is to embark on full-scale implementation of the ICT policy and strategies to translate this potential into actual national competitive advantage. Government will, through the Ministry of Science

and Technology Development, table during this Session a Bill providing for the establishment of the National Information and Communication Technology Authority as well as the Bill for the formation of the Converged National Information and Communication Technologies Regulator to facilitate implementation of the already approved National Information and Communication Technology Policy.

In view of the shortcomings associated with the Research Act, which currently governs all our research activities, an Innovation, Science and Technology Bill, which provides for the integration of science, technology and innovation initiatives by the various players in the country, will be brought up for consideration by this House during the Session we are opening today.

A Bill providing for the transformation of the Central Statistical Office into a semi-autonomous agency will be brought for consideration during this Session. The envisaged transformation of the Central Statistical Office will ensure the harmonisation of Zimbabwe's statistical system, a move which will lead to improved service delivery.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker Sir,

Sustainable development can only thrive in an atmosphere where the Nation has control over its resources. Impelled by this moral obligation to ensure the country derives due benefit from the exploitation of its resource endowment, Government will, during this Session, give legal underpinning to the existing indigenisation and empowerment policy thrust. Implementation of this thrust shall proceed on a sectoral basis,

focusing initially on mining and tourism. In doing so, however, Government remains fully cognisant of the critical role of other development partners and investors and, as such, will continue to pursue mutually beneficial development partnerships with these players.

The development of the country's small to medium enterprises sector features highly on the national agenda, and the creation of a full ministry to promote development of the sector is eloquent testimony to this commitment. The re-organisation and provision of critical business infrastructure for this sector will continue in the context of phase II of Operation *Garikai/Hlalani Kuhle*. Implementation of the People's Shops concept and the resuscitation of women's clubs and co-operatives will also receive greater attention in this programme. A total of \$17,5 billion has been made available to businesses in this sector in this financial year, while various entrepreneurial training workshops have also been lined up.

Because the need to improve the quality of life in rural areas is morally compelling, moreso, given that over 70 percent of our people reside on the countryside, two Ministries have been especially charged with this responsibility. The Ministry of Rural Housing and Social Amenities will embark on vigorous implementation of the Rural Housing Policy and the social amenities development programme which will involve the construction of model homesteads and rehabilitation of rural schools in the various provinces. The Ministry of Water Resources and Infrastructure Development will ensure that all communal and resettled communities have reliable and constant access to clean, safe drinking water. To this end,

while 48 dams are under repair, 21 small-to-medium sized irrigation schemes are also being rehabilitated under the accelerated irrigation rehabilitation programme and other initiatives driven by the Reserve Bank's Agricultural Sector Performance Enhancement Facility.

As a member of the International Labour Organisation, Zimbabwe endeavours to conform to the terms and standards of the body. Consequently, a Public Service Amendment Bill, which will provide for public servants to engage in collective bargaining, dispute resolution, recognition of associations and their participation in the making of laws, regulations, notices and circulars shall be tabled in this House during this Session.

The Older Persons Bill, which seeks to streamline the care and protection of older persons, shall also be tabled. The State Service (Pensions) Bill, providing for the creation of a State Pension Fund will be brought to Parliament for consideration.

The transformation of the country's education sector is critical if the country is to enhance the competitiveness of this human resource. In pursuance of this goal, Government, through the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, will implement a two-pathway education structure, which caters for the varying aptitudes and abilities of learners. Under this system, learners will be given a broad curriculum at Forms I and II, and be examined thereafter. On the basis of their aptitudes, results of the examination and their interests, the learners will be guided to their respective areas of specialisation at both middle and senior secondary school levels. It is on the basis of their established aptitudinal direction that the reviewed educational system will take them forward.

Madame President, Mr Speaker Sir,

The transformation and empowerment of the youth remains a top priority for my government given that the youths are the bedrock of the Nation's future. Thus, implementation of the recently approved Zimbabwe Youth Employment Network Programme, which prioritises youth employment creation, shall commence in earnest. Government, through the Ministry of Youth Development and Employment Creation, will establish a National Youth Databank, which will provide the information required in the development and co-ordination of youth-related programmes.

As a Nation, we are challenged by the incidence of gender-based violence and the rampant abuse of minors, trends which betray increasing moral decadence in our society. Consequently, a Domestic Violence Bill, which will provide a legal framework for dealing with the problem of domestic violence shall be tabled during this Session. Further, it is high time we critically consider a total shift from some retrogressive traditional and religious practices that include wife inheritance, girl-child marriages and child pledging, which continue to enshackle the girl child. Apart from delaying national efforts towards gender equality, such abhorrent practices also run counter to efforts to prevent the spread of the HIV/Aids pandemic.

The prevailing economic situation has no doubt contributed to a rise in various forms of criminal behaviour. This state of malaise calls for greater industriousness on the part of the police in order to combat the broad range of offences. Accordingly, the Police Act will be amended to enhance the

operational efficiency of the Zimbabwe Republic Police. Furthermore, the Suppression of Foreign and International Terrorism Bill, which empowers the police to deal with transnational terrorism shall be brought to this House, while the United Nations Convention on Transnational Crime together with the SADC Protocol on Extradition, which foster co-operation in the prevention and suppression of crime in the region shall also be brought before Parliament for ratification during this Session.

Another regrettable development is the incidence of cases of corruption, which threatens our moral fabric. This scourge has the potential to undermine the very foundations of the country's socio-economic development and, as such, constitutes a potent threat to national well-being. Government will, therefore, not hesitate to invoke the full force of the law against those perpetrating this vice, regardless of their social status or political affiliation. To enhance continental and international co-operation in combating corruption, the African Union Convention Against Corruption and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption will be brought before this House for ratification during the Session starting today. The Anti-Corruption Commission Act and the Prevention of Corruption Act shall also be amended for purposes of strengthening capacity for the prevention, investigation, prosecution and punishment of corruption and related economic crimes.

The health sector continues to grapple with challenges relating mainly to shortage of essential drugs and the brain drain. However, the acceptance of a second local manufacturer of anti-retroviral drugs should help ease the

plight of those of our people affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. As part of measures to arrest the shortage of medical staff, a cadetship programme through which graduates will be bonded to the State for a period equal to the period of their education and training shall be introduced. In line with the goal of ensuring that all rural health centres have qualified personnel by the end of next year, 300 primary care nurses are to be deployed to the health centres next month. In keeping with the country's record of maintaining an excellent immunisation programme, this year's national programme was held last month.

It will be remembered that this year alone, our country and others in the region have experienced earthquakes and tremors on four occasions. This high incidence of these natural phenomena, which until recently were scarcely known in this part of the globe, calls on us to abandon our previous *laissez faire* approach and become more pro-active in seeking to cope with possible future occurrences.

Madame President, Mr Speaker Sir,

While we continue to enjoy cordial relations with countries within our region and further afield we, however, note with concern the continued imposition of illegal sanctions against Zimbabwe by the European Union and the United State of America, all this, at the behest of our erstwhile British colonisers. It is however, refreshing that the world has now become fully aware of the dishonest and hypocritical anti-Zimbabwe strategy of the current British Government. We feel proud that we have defeated that strategy which was aimed at the collapse of the Zimbabwe economy and an

envisaged regime change. Zimbabwe will never be a colony again!

In our quest for peace, stability and economic prosperity, we will continue to deepen and broaden our relations both regionally and internationally. In pursuance of this, therefore, some outstanding SADC Protocols and a number of African Union and United Nations treaties and conventions will be presented before Parliament during this Session. With regard to the reforms of the United Nations, we remain fully supportive of the African Union's position that Africa be fully represented in all decision-making organs of the UN and more specifically, that it be granted not less than two permanent Security Council seats with all the prerogatives and privileges applicable to other permanent members.

Madame President, Mr Speaker Sir,

As a Nation we need to remain vigilant against those reactionary elements amongst us and those outside our borders who submit themselves to cheque-book diplomacy and plan to trample on the fundamental tenets of popular democracy out of an overweening ambition for power. Having failed to win the approval of the electorate, they would now want to subvert the country's legal electoral processes. They have become champions of violence within and without their own political organs. They should be warned that the forces of law and order will not hesitate to deal firmly with all those who have made violence their culture. Notwithstanding the incidents of violence by our political malcontents, the country cherishes the long-

established state of peace and tranquillity. We remain a peaceful Nation whose people in the main are hardworking.

Finally, I wish firstly to pay tribute to our Security Forces for their continuing role in securing our peace and stability. Secondly, my tribute goes to the gallant people for continuing to exhibit great fortitude of mind and unyielding regard for the sanctity of our national sovereign integrity despite the prevailing economic challenges largely orchestrated by the country's detractors. Through this all-conquering will and self-belief we continue to safeguard our freedom and national sovereignty. Indeed, our sense of resolve should continue to be nourished by the supreme sacrifices of the days gone by, even as our self-determination today bids us to declare that Zimbabwe will never ever be a colony again!

Madame President, Mr Speaker Sir.

I now wish to commend these matters for your consideration and declare the Second Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Republic of Zimbabwe duly open.

I thank you.