

THIRTY-FIRST POST CABINET PRESS BRIEFING

1.0 ZIMBABWE'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, AND REPORT ON THE PROCUREMENT AND ROLL-OUT OF VACCINES

Cabinet received an update on the Country's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, as presented by the Chairman of the National COVID-19 Inter-Ministerial Committee, Vice President and Minister of Health and Child Care, Honourable Dr. C.G.D.N. Chiwenga.

The nation is informed that since the outbreak of the pandemic, the **country's cumulative COVID-19** cases reached 257 905 as at 16th October 2022, with 251 916 recoveries and 5 608 deaths. The recovery rate was 98%, with 381 active cases recorded. A total of 156 new cases were recorded during the week, compared to 211 recorded the previous week. Of the total number of new cases reported during the week, eight (8) were detected at St Alberts High School, Muzarabani district, Mashonaland Central. For the week under review there were twenty-**two new admissions' compared to** the twenty-one recorded the previous week. Of these, two were admitted to the Intensive Care Unit.

Regarding the National Vaccination Programme, the nation is being informed that, as at 16th October, 2022, a total of 6 544 428 first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine had been administered, while 4 904 750

people had received their second dose, and 1 178 424 their third dose. Low uptake of vaccination is being witnessed in Harare, Mashonaland West, and Mashonaland Central Provinces. The local leadership is called upon to encourage their people to get vaccinated. Provinces must continue to find innovative ways to ramp up the vaccination activities and to continue to focus on schools. Recently Government gazetted SI 169 on wearing of face masks which states that:

- a) The wearing of masks is mandatory indoors at work places and places to which the public has access or in public transport; and
- b) Outdoors, in public places except for those individuals who have had at least 2 doses of vaccines (fully vaccinated)

To this end, the Law-and-Order Subcommittee and the local leadership is called upon to strengthen enforcement of the wearing of face masks in line with the new Statutory Instrument.

2.0 NATIONAL GRAINS STATUS REPORT

Cabinet received the National Grains Status Report as at 16 October 2022, as presented by the Minister of Local Government and Public Works, as Acting Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, Hon. July Moyo.

Cabinet advises that the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) grain stocks as at 16th October, 2022 stood at 563 604 metric tonnes comprising 486 717 metric tonnes of maize and 76 887 metric tonnes of traditional

grains. Using the monthly consumption rate of 49 294 metric tonnes, the available grain will last for 11.4 months.

This week the current wheat stocks stand at 89 331 metric tonnes, and this will provide **3.6 months' cover at a consumption rate of 21 000** metric tonnes per month. Harvesting of the 2022 Winter wheat crop is progressing in many parts of the country.

3.0 REPORT ON THE MAIN TRIPARTITE NEGOTIATING FORUM (TNF) MEETING

The Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Hon. Professor Paul Mavima updated Cabinet on the outcome of the Tripartite Negotiating Forum Meeting, held on 23 September, 2022.

The TNF is an important platform where Government and trade unions come together to discuss issues pertaining to wages and working conditions in the national interest.

The Nation is informed that Cabinet considered the report on the outcome of the Main Tripartite Negotiating Forum. Cabinet noted the recommendations made and took on board some suggestions as follows:

- a) the ratification of the Violence and Harassment at the Workplace Convention, 2019 (No. 190) and the Promotional Framework for

Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) with a view to strengthening the occupational safety and health system and also combating violence and harassment in the world of work,

Cabinet noted the updates on the labour law reform, operationalisation of the TNF and the Report of the TNF Technical Committee. Pertaining to salaries and wages, here are some of the recommendations:

- a) that a guide be provided to all bargaining platforms across all sectors to strive towards pegging the minimum wage at US\$150.00 payable either in ZWL\$ or at the prevailing inter-bank rate;
- b) the proposed guideline for the minimum wage will be subject to review at the Main TNF meeting in the first quarter of 2023;
- c) Government to consider tax cuts on wages and salaries to increase disposable incomes; and
- d) fair distribution of incomes should become a policy and planning imperative.

On currency exchange and stabilization, the nation is informed that Cabinet noted the following:

- (a) that the RBZ will continue to continue to perform its statutory functions such as a central bank which inter alia include banker to government, lender of last resort, protection of depositors deposits, regulation of banks, formulation of monetary policy including administration of frameworks for fixing exchange rates and interest rates.

- (b) that the foreign currency available will continue to be auctioned, and all winning bids should be settled within two days from the date of the auction (T+2) in line with internationally accepted practices; and
- (c) Government will continue to institute and strengthen measures aimed at bringing confidence and stability in the economy and eliminate arbitrage opportunities through manipulation of the exchange rate.

Pertaining to price stabilisation, Cabinet agreed that the tripartite partners should work towards conclusion of a social contract/pact to help promote the stabilization of the economy. Social contract should be the tool for moderating increases in prices of goods and services as well as restrain increases in salaries and wages to counter inflationary measures.

4.0 2022 POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS: FERTILITY

Cabinet received and noted the 2022 Population and Housing Census: Fertility Results as presented by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Hon. Prof. M. Ncube.

The 2022 Population and Housing Census collected data on fertility which is a key driver of population change apart from mortality and migration. Data on fertility will provide the following indicators: crude birth rates, general

fertility rates; age specific fertility rates; total fertility rates; and medium age of first live births.

Cabinet reports that at the national level, the general fertility rate was 114 live births per 1 000 women. Mashonaland Central had highest general fertility rates at 137 live births per 1 000 women; and Bulawayo, with 73 live births per 1 000 women, had the lowest general fertility rate.

Cabinet advises that at the national level, total fertility rate was 3.7 children per woman. Mashonaland Central had 4.4 children per woman, while Bulawayo had 2.4 children per woman. An analysis of fertility by rural and urban areas revealed that the total fertility rate was higher in rural areas with 4.2 children per woman compared with 2.8 children per woman in urban areas.

Regarding age specific fertility rate by age group, the nation is informed that it was highest in the 20 to 24 year age group, with a rate of 178.4 live births per 1 000 women. Age specific Fertility Rate was lowest in the 45 to 49 age group with a 7.4 live births per 1 000 women. Age Specific Fertility Rate was higher in rural areas where fertility peaked in the 20 to 24 years age group with 212 live births per 1 000 women. In urban areas, it peaked in the 25 to 29 year age group consisting of 144.7 live births per 1 000 women.

Cabinet reports that at the national level, 1.0% of the women aged 20 to 24 years, got married before attaining the age of 15 years. The population was

higher in rural areas at 1.6% as compared to 0.3% in urban areas. At the national level, 16.2% of the women aged 20 to 24 years, got married before attaining 18 years. The population was 22.7% in rural areas; and 7.2% in urban areas. Mashonaland Central had the highest proportion at 28.8% of women who got married before 18 years, while Bulawayo had the lowest at 2.6%.

Pertaining to infant birth registration, the nation is advised that at the national level 19.1% (84 419) births were registered for infants. Birth registration for infants was 28.3% (45 982) for urban areas and 13.7% (38 437) for rural areas. Population of registered births was highest in Masvingo at 35.1% and lowest in Mashonaland Central at 14.7%. This information will help guide Government decisions with respect to predicting the needs for enhanced public service delivery, for example provision of national registration documents.

5.0 TYNWALD HIGH SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENT

The Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Hon Evelyn Ndlovu reported on the Tynwald High School bus accident.

Cabinet noted with sadness that on Friday, 14th October, 2022, six Tynwald High School pupils (five girls and one boy) perished in a tragic accident in Nyanga on their way to a school trip. The accident happened around 1900hrs and left 35 other pupils and four staff members injured. Currently,

32 pupils have been treated and discharged, while five remain in a critical condition at the Avenues Clinic. Two teachers have been discharged, while two remain admitted and critical at Avenues Clinic. As Government we are deeply saddened by this loss of life. Police investigations are ongoing.

In order to reduce road carnages, Cabinet resolved as follows:

1. that there was need to reduce travelling at night;
2. that drivers need to familiarise themselves with the routes that they will be using when ferrying children; and
3. that traffic safety awareness programmes in schools be ramped up.

Cabinet wishes to express its deepest condolences to the bereaved families and communities.

6.0 STATUS OF THE GAMING INDUSTRY IN ZIMBABWE

Cabinet received and approved the amendment of the Lotteries and Gaming Act which is intended to improve revenue collection from the Gaming Industry as presented by the Minister of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage, Honourable Kazembe Kazembe.

The nation is being informed that the Lotteries and Gaming Board (LGB) is operating under an Act that came into force in 1998. Although the Act was amended twice in 2001 and 2002, it has become inadequate in addressing evolving trends within the gambling space, consistent with the global growth

of online gambling. Essential amendments to the Act include provisions allowing online gaming and compelling operators to incorporate technology compatible with LGB systems for monitoring and control purposes.

Government is losing substantial amounts of revenue through numerous leakages and legislative inadequacies that need to be plugged. The envisaged amendment of the Act will undoubtedly promote easy supervision and monitoring of gaming activities, and mitigate money laundering as well as enhance revenue streams. There is need to adapt to the ever-changing environment through deploying appropriate technologies. Government cannot ascertain the actual levies due to it if it relies on statements provided by the operators.

The nation is being informed that the Lotteries and Gaming Board has since received presentations from companies on technologies that will enhance Government revenue collection within the Gaming Industry. The LGB will continue engaging these companies in order to ensure that appropriate technologies are adopted for use in the country.

7.0 PRINCIPLES OF THE LEGAL AID (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2022

Cabinet considered and approved the Principles of the Legal Aid (Amendment) Bill, 2022 as presented by the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Honourable Ziyambi Ziyambi.

The nation is being informed that the Legal Aid Amendment Bill, 2022 seeks to amend the Legal Aid Act [Chapter 7:16], as the current legislation is inadequate and out of sync with current international norms and standards relating to the provision of legal aid. The amendment will make State-funded legal aid more accessible to all persons who require it, but are unable to afford legal practitioners of their choice. The Bill will provide for the following:

- a) an accreditation system for legal aid providers;
- b) a funding model that recognises and increases other sources of funding for legal aid;
- c) clarity and ability to identify civil matters that should receive legal aid;
- d) **exemption for children from being subjected to a “means test” by the Legal Aid Directorate; and**
- e) establishment of special measures for accessing legal aid by women, persons with special needs such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, persons with mental illnesses, persons living with HIV/AIDS, and drug and victims of substance abuse.

8.0 REPORT ON THE ANTICIPATED RETURN OF HOLDERS OF ZIMBABWE EXEMPTION PERMITS FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Cabinet received a Report on the Anticipated Return of Holders of Zimbabwe Exemption Permits from South Africa as presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Honourable Dr Fredrick Shava.

The nation is being informed that following the decision by the South Africa Government to terminate the Zimbabwe Exemption Permits (ZEP) on 30 June 2023, it is anticipated that there will be a number of returning citizens upon expiry of the permits.

The nation is being informed that engagements on the issue are being held at the Government to Government level, with the latest ones being held at the Mid-Term Review Meeting of the Zimbabwe-South Africa Bi-National Commission in Pretoria on 10 August 2022. The South African Government expressed concern that less than 10% of ZEP holders had applied for the available mainstream visas. The Government of Zimbabwe is encouraging the ZEP holders to comply with the South African laws.

The nation is further informed that Government through its institutions is ready to receive its nationals and is working on mechanisms to facilitate the smooth flow of the returnees at the Beitbridge border post.

8.1 REPORT ON THE 1ST AFRICA-GERMANY TRADE AND INVESTMENT CONFERENCE

Cabinet received a Report on the 1st Africa-Germany Trade and Investment Conference as presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Honourable Dr Fredrick Shava.

The nation is being informed that the 1st Africa-Germany Trade and Investment Conference was held in Frankfurt, Germany from 12 – 13 October, 2022. The Conference was organised by the German Business Association (Afrika-Verein). A number of African countries participated at the Conference. Honourable Dr Fredrick Shava led the Zimbabwean delegation that included ZimTrade, the Industrial Development Corporation of Zimbabwe (IDCZ), and the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI).

The nation is being informed that the Conference discussed ways of increasing trade and investment between African countries and Germany. The Zimbabwean delegation highlighted trade and investment opportunities that Germany companies could take up. Afrika-Verein expressed readiness to organise a business mission to Zimbabwe and assist in countering the negative reportage on the country by the hostile international media houses.

9.0 NATIONAL STATUS AND STRATEGIES TO MANAGE VELD FIRES

Cabinet received a report on the National Status and Strategies to Manage Veld Fires as presented by the Minister of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry, Honourable Mangaliso Ndlovu.

The nation is being informed that the year 2022 is showing an upsurge in uncontrolled fire problems threatening the gains realised in the past. As at 12 October 2022, a total of 5 386 fire incidences were reported and burnt 1 244 227.34 hectares of land. The majority of the fires were recorded in A1 and A2 Resettlement areas, protected areas such as Safari areas, national parks and gazetted forests. The area burnt increased by 58.6% from the same period in 2021. The nation has lost 18 precious lives this year from these fires.

Cabinet has resolved to strengthen implementation of the following strategies to manage veld fires:

- a) to constitute Fire Coordination Teams at the district, provincial and national level;
- b) the Fire Coordinating Teams will work with AGRITEX to facilitate localised training, education and awareness of fire management;
- c) the Environmental Forestry Commission to immediately conduct fire fighting refresher courses in Rural District Councilors;
- d) Establishment of rapid response teams in all villages and wards across the country;
- e) Acquisition of modern fire-fighting equipment in the medium and long term;
- f) Setting up of teams for fire audits and persecution;
- g) Stiffer penalties for offenders and the traditional leaders to play a prominent role; and

h) that Temporary Deposit Accounts in the Districts and Provinces be replenished with petty cash for prompt response to disasters using the **country's decentralised Civil Protection structures.**

I THANK YOU!