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**GENERAL DEBATE STATEMENT BY  
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MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION,  
TO BE DELIVERED DURING THE 80<sup>TH</sup> UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY GENERAL  
DEBATE TO BE DELIVERED ON 29<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025 AT THE UN  
HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK**

**SEPTEMBER, 2025**

- **Your Excellency Madam Annalena Baerbock - President of the 80<sup>th</sup> 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 Delegates**

I am honored to address this august Assembly on behalf of Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia. Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Madam President, on your election to the presidency of the 80<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly.

The choice of theme, **“Better Together: 80 Years and More for Peace, Development and Human Rights”** is timely as it underscores the need for us to work together for the common good, in the face of multiple global challenges. In this regard, Zambia reaffirms its faith in multilateralism and the United Nations Charter, a key foundation of our shared commitment to international peace and cooperation.

Over the past eight decades, the United Nations has been the cornerstone of global peace, security and cooperation. It has helped prevent major conflicts, advanced decolonization, supported peacekeeping missions and played a leading role in advancing global action in public health, education and humanitarian relief that have saved countless lives. Through initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, it has mobilized nations to reduce poverty, improve public health and education, as well as promoted gender equality.

We also note that peace is intrinsically intertwined with development as there can be no sustainable development in the absence of peace. Therefore, the UN’s efforts at peace building and peace keeping are very critical for the development of all regions of the world even those seemingly distant from the war front.

We recognize, however, that the UN has been slow to react to some of the conflictsituations which has led to serioushumanitarian crises. We also acknowledge the need for key reforms and genuine inclusiveness particularly for Africa, whose voice remains stifled. After eight decades, we must reflect on this and other areas that could be enhanced.

Though challenges remain, the United Nations has proved that multilateralism can deliver tangible progress for humanity. We are confident that the Pact for the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations agreed upon during the 79<sup>th</sup>Session renews our hope and solidarity to sustain the momentum of the past eighty years.

### **Madam President**

At 80 years, the United Nations has a wealth of experience to draw on, but it must also continue to renew itself and adapt to the changing landscape to remain fit-for-purpose.

We therefore welcome the UN80 Initiative at this critical time that the organization is facing unprecedented financial constraints. If executed well, these reforms have the potential to transform how the UN works by enhancing efficiencies through review of the implementation of its mandates, introducing structural changes and programme realignment.

### **Madam President,**

As we undertake these reforms it will be important to ensure that the pursuit of efficiency, should not be at the expense the UN's reach and impact on the interests of developing countries, particularly those facing the largest implementation gaps in the SDGs. The UN80 Initiative must strengthen delivery in the three core pillars of the United Nations of peace and security, development and human rights. We must preserve those parts of the UN that work. For instance, theResident Coordinator system has helped coordinate various UN development agencies to ensure they work together effectively, efficiently and transparently in supporting the

host governments achieve SDGs. These reforms must served to strengthen the RC system.

## **Madam President**

We meet at a critical moment, when escalation in geopolitical tensions pose a significant threat to the gains made in the eighty years of the United Nations existence. This exacerbates the existing challenges and places multilateralism under threat.

Further, we have witnessed how challenges such as ongoing conflict situation, climate shocks and the pandemic have negatively impacted the global economy. It is therefore, clear that **a short period of war or crisis can erase decades of development gains**. We therefore, categorically condemn war and aggression and urge all parties in conflict to choose diplomacy over violence. Allow me to re-echo President Hakainde Hichilema's constant reminder to the world that ***"instability anywhere is instability everywhere!"***

Zambia therefore remains an advocate for peace, human rights, good governance and inclusive development for a strengthened multilateral system. Further, we remain committed to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Zambia has been actively engaged in regional peace efforts. We continue to support the work of the African Union and regional organizations in mediation and peacekeeping, including in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region.

Here at the United Nations, we as African Nations count on the continued support of the international community in initiatives to "silence the guns" in Africa and resolve conflicts worldwide, for a more secure world.

## Madam President

Inspired by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and our national vision, we have undertaken bold reforms to improve the lives of our people, even as we recover from the devastating drought that affected our county in 2024.

A cornerstone of our strategy is investing in our people, especially the youth. Believing that education is the greatest equalizer, our Government introduced free primary and secondary education for all children and recruited a record number of teachers to improve the quality of education.

We further recognise that a healthy population underpins productivity and inclusive growth. Zambia therefore, remains steadfast in its pursuit of health for all by building resilient, equitable, and accessible health systems. We are expanding infrastructure, providing essential supplies, and deploying thousands of health workers to underserved areas, among other interventions.

While we recognize the changing landscape in Official Development Assistance, we call on development partners to continue their support to HIV/AIDS programmes especially with antiretroviral therapy, so that countries such as Zambia that have made progress in the fight against HIV do not regress on account of funding constraints.

We therefore, look forward to the upcoming World Social Summit in Qatar that will accord us an opportunity to engage on key social development issues and advance social progress, ensuring that no one is left behind in our global sustainable development journey.

***We urge all Member States and development partners to prioritize health spending as a strategic investment because human capital is the greatest asset of any nation.***

## Madam President

To protect the most vulnerable, Zambia has scaled up social safety nets. Our Social Cash Transfer programme now reaches over 6.5% households. This and other complementary initiatives such as food security packs and

skills training has been crucial in cushioning families from shocks and lifting communities out of extreme poverty.

### **Madam President**

We believe that empowering women is more than just a moral duty. When women thrive, families prosper, and nations advance. We therefore, place women and youth at the center of our transformation through affirmative measures that enhance women's participation in decision-making and protect their careers and families. We continue to lead efforts to eliminate gender-based violence and child marriage through strengthening laws and community awareness programmes.

***We call on the international community to redouble efforts toward gender equality, especially as we commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Women's Conference and Beijing Programme of Action.***

### **Madam President**

Zambia's economy, like many other developing countries, has endured turbulent times in recent years. Upon assuming office, our Government's highest priority was to restore macroeconomic stability, which we are steadily delivering. We implemented difficult but necessary reforms to restructure our public debt in order to create fiscal space.

This debt restructuring, alongside our ongoing IMF-supported programme, has put Zambia firmly on a path to debt sustainability and renewed investor confidence. However, stabilizing the economy is only the first step. We are equally focused on reigniting growth and economic transformation through diversification.

### **Madam President**

The existential threat of climate change looms over all our aspirations. Despite our minimal contribution to global emissions, many

developing countries often experience increasing frequency of climate shocks such as droughts and destructive floods.

In this regard, we look ahead with hope to the upcoming COP30 in Brazil, which will mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Paris Agreement. This milestone conference must be a turning point from promises to action. Zambia has submitted its revised Nationally Determined Contribution, NDC 3.0 and we therefore, encourage other countries to do the same with enhanced ambition to be within reach of the 1.5°C goal.

***We must act now, to limit global warming and adapt to its effects. Let us summon the political will for bold action that safeguards the planet for future generations.***

### **Madam President**

Five years to the year 2030, only 17% of SDGs are on track. We also note that several developing countries remain fiscally constrained in directing sufficient resources towards SDGs on account of increasing debt burdens, highlighting the need to strengthen mechanisms for resolving debt crises.

Against this backdrop, Zambia was privileged to have co-facilitated the outcome document of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, which unanimously adopted the Sevilla Commitment. This outcome has renewed global consensus to close the \$4 trillion annual SDG financing gap.

It is now time to move from commitments to action. We call on nations, development banks, and the private sector to align their policies and investments with the SDGs. Official Development Assistance, a lifeline for Least Developed Countries must be protected. There is need to scale up domestic resource mobilization, embracing innovative financing mechanisms, tackling illicit financial flows, and promoting private sector involvement.

### **Madam President**

For too long, the current international financial architecture has perpetuated structural inequalities, particularly for developing countries. The post-war institutions designed to promote global economic stability and growth no longer reflect today's geopolitical and economic realities.

Many African countries, continue to bear the weight of unsustainable debt, limited access to concessional financing, and the effects of global shocks beyond their control - from climate change to pandemics and geopolitical conflicts.

We, therefore, welcome the commitments from various stakeholders for comprehensive reform of the global financial system. This reform should include governance reform of global financial institutions to strengthen representation of developing countries in international economic decision making. Zambia further, welcomes initiatives such as the borrower's forum to ensure fair and timely resolution of debt.

### **Madam President**

Zambia is both a Least Developed Country (LDC) and a Landlocked Developing Country (LLDC). These two categories of countries face unique structural challenges. In July 2025, Zambia was privileged to co-host the LDC Future Forum in Lusaka, whose insights on building resilience to shocks and the need for innovation to address challenges were empowering. During the conference our Republican President Mr. Hakainde Hichilema underscored the need for LDCs to be build resilience by being more proactive and self-reliant.

As a landlocked country, Zambia welcomes the Awaza Programme of Action which prioritizes structural transformation, trade facilitation, regional connectivity, resilience, and ICT infrastructure, which reflect our own priorities. We also welcome the Awaza's call for innovative financing.

Landlocked need not mean isolated and incased. As our President fondly states, **LLDCs can become land-linked rather than land-locked** and we in Zambia are committed to making this vision a reality.

### **Madam President**



The theme of this session, "*Better Together*," also compels us to reflect on the United Nations' readiness to address today's complex challenges. The Security Council's current composition and working methods reflect a bygone era and are overdue for reform. Decisions on critical peace and security issues are too often stalled by the veto power of a few, even when the wider membership speaks clearly. Africa, with 1.4 billion people, still has no permanent seat, a historical injustice that must be rectified.

Zambia therefore, reaffirms the Common African Position on Security Council Reform, as set out in the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration. We call for comprehensive reform that expands both permanent and non-permanent membership to make the Council more equitable, effective, and reflective of today's world.

**Madam President, Excellencies,**

Eighty years ago, the world emerged from war with a promise to never again allow division and destruction to define our collective future. That promise is being tested today.

Let this 80<sup>th</sup> General Assembly be remembered as a turning point where the world chose **solidarity over silence, justice over inertia, and unity over division.**

We must act, not out of fear, but out of **hope** not in isolation, but in **solidarity** as we are **better together.**

**I Thank You.**