

Madame President of the Senate,

Mr Speaker, Sir,

Senators,

Members of the House of Assembly,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Comrades and Friends.

This Fifth and final Session of the Eighth Parliament of Zimbabwe comes at a time when some measure of progress has been made in the process of aligning our laws to the Constitution. Much more though, still has to be done in fulfilment of the aspirations of our people, expressed during the Constitution outreach campaign. As such, it is my fervent hope that for the remaining life of this Parliament, emphasis be on the alignment of the remaining pieces of legislation to the Constitution.

Out of the 206 pieces of legislation identified as requiring alignment to the Constitution, only 30 Acts remain outstanding. The rest have been aligned through the enactment of legislation, such as the National Prosecuting Authority Act, the Public Debt Management Act and the promulgation of the General Laws Amendment Act. Let me take this opportunity to urge this august House to expedite consideration of the other Bills that have already been submitted for scrutiny.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

To provide for the proper ways of handling of children that are in conflict with the law, the Child Justice Bill, which provides a dedicated child justice system, and the Marriages Bill, which outlaws child marriages, will be brought before this august House.

In addition, the Coroner's Office Bill, which establishes the Coroner's office that will be responsible for medico-legal investigations into

unexplained, suspicious, sudden and unexpected causes of death, will be presented before this Parliament.

Furthermore, to confer additional functions provided for by the Constitution on the Constitutional Court, the Constitutional Court Bill will be brought to this Parliament, together with the Companies Amendment Bill, the Prisons, and Correctional Service Bill, which also seeks to align the existing Acts to the Constitution.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

This Session also comes amid increased optimism for a stronger rebound of the national economy, largely buoyed by the present good performance in agriculture and mining. The country has this year succeeded in regaining its food self-sufficiency, on the back of a good rain season and the introduction of the Command Agriculture Production Programme. Government is now working to consolidate agriculture

through, among other things, investing more resources in water harvesting and irrigation development.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

The phenomenon of Climate Change is now a distinct reality in our region. This has been amply confirmed by the growing incidence of alternating bouts of floods and droughts which we are witnessing as a region. To strengthen our disaster responses and resilience mechanisms, and in order to effectively respond to such occurrences as a country, a Disaster Risk Management Bill will be tabled in this august House.

To enhance national economic competitiveness and the country's appeal as an investment destination, Government has embarked on reforms to improve the domestic business environment. A number of identified supportive legislative amendments have already been forwarded to this august House for action. These include the Insolvency Bill; the Judicial Laws Amendment Bill; the Estate Administrators Amendment Bill; and

the Shop Licenses Amendment Bill. I, therefore, appeal to this august House to accord priority attention to these very important Bills when this Session gets underway.

In addition, the Labour Law Amendment Bill, which seeks to address stakeholders' concerns relating to labour market flexibility and job security, will soon be tabled before this House. The Public Entities and Corporate Governance Bill already before Parliament will bolster the fight against corruption and other corporate governance ills afflicting our public entities.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

The Cooperating Societies Amendment Bill to strengthen the regulation of cooperatives in the country will be brought for consideration by this Parliament. Work is also underway to come up with a Land Developers Bill in order to bring sanity in the operations of land developers.

Furthermore, the Protocol Amending the Marrakesh Agreement

establishing the World Trade Organisation, will be tabled for ratification during this Session. The Agreement seeks to promote the expeditious movement of goods through the application of technological innovations.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

The sustained growth in the mining sector's contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product, hinges on the full implementation of the beneficiation and value addition programme. I therefore, appeal for the expeditious finalisation of Parliament scrutiny of the Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill, and the Mineral Exploration and Marketing Corporation Bill. Furthermore, in order to curb mineral leakages and realise full value from the country's rich mineral endowment, amendments to the Gold Trade Act and the Precious Stones Trade Act, will be tabled for consideration during this Session.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

In the tourism sector, I wish to note that Zimbabwe has acceded to the relevant Annex of the 1947 UN Convention on Privileges and Immunities under the United Nations World Tourism Organisation, and also ratified the UNWTO Statutes and Financing Rules. This, it is envisaged, will enhance the free movement of staff and experts, as we seek to consolidate our tourism brand.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

The continued loss of lives through traffic accidents on our roads is disturbing. Government is, thus, in the process of establishing a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund to, among other issues, accord a measure of relief to survivors and families of the victims. I, once again, appeal to all our drivers and public passenger transport operators to play their part in preventing the carnage on our roads.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

The advent of information communication technologies, while creating fertile opportunities for development, has also brought with it new challenges. As part of our own efforts to deal with these challenges, this Parliament will receive, for consideration, the Cyber Crime and Cyber Security Bill, the Electronic Transactions and Electronic Commerce Bill, and the Data Protection Bill.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

In the education sector, a Teaching Professions Council Bill, which seeks to regulate and promote ethical conduct within the teaching profession, will be tabled in this Parliament. Furthermore, a Bill to establish the Institute of Education Research, Innovation and Development will be tabled for consideration during this Parliamentary Session.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

The problem of trafficking in persons is now no longer an alien phenomenon. As a country, we have indeed been horrified by the harrowing experiences of our citizens who fell victim to this heinous crime after having been lured to foreign lands by the promise of employment and better fortunes. As part of efforts to address this challenge, the Smuggling of Migrants Protocol, which seeks to promote safe migration management within the country and to uphold the dignity of rights of migrants, will be brought before this Parliament for ratification.

Similarly, the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of, and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition, which will enhance cooperation with regional and international agencies in ensuring the safety of citizens, will be tabled before this august House.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

Our society continues to be appalled by the rising incidence of rape. I therefore, call upon all families, churches, schools, politicians and the traditional leadership to fight against this grossly decadent practice. On its part, Government will bring to this Parliament, the Mandatory Sentencing for Rape and Sexual Abuse Bill, which provides for more deterrent measures against the perpetrators of this revulsive crime.

Let me take this opportunity to thank our Defence and Security Forces for remaining steadfast in safeguarding peace and tranquility in our nation. To further strengthen the discharge of this role, the Defence Forces Act shall be amended to render it consistent with the Constitution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The many pieces of legislation for tabling during this Session certainly mean hard work which demands absolute commitment and diligence

from all Members of Parliament. We, therefore, expect robust and well-informed debate from all Members, who should always be present, punctual, disciplined, professional, and of impeccable Parliamentary conduct. Much more is even expected from Cabinet Ministers who should lead by example.

Madame President, Mr. Speaker, Sir,

I now declare the Fifth Session of the Eighth Parliament of Zimbabwe duly open.

I thank you.