Today is an important day Zambia joins the rest of the World to commemorate Cancer day under the global theme: ‘I am and I will’
This day is significant because it unites the world’s population in the fight against cancer.
This year’s commemoration marks the launch of the 3-year ‘I am and I will’ campaign. ‘I am and I will’ is the empowering call-to-action urging for personal commitments and represent the power of the individual action taken now to impact the future. The local theme for this years is ‘I am concerned. I will fight cancer.’

The theme emphasizes the need for individuals to harness and mobilize the solutions and catalyze positive change in cancer prevention, control and treatment. It is in line with the Ministry of Health transformative agenda which integrates provision of promotive, preventive and screening, early diagnosis and treatment, rehabilitative and palliative health care services in the fight against cancer.
Cancer is one of the leading causes of deaths globally, with approximately 14 million new cases recorded each year.

From the WHO statistics based on data from the Zambia National Cancer Registry, the estimated total number of new cases in 2018 were over 12,000 whereas the total number of deaths were 7,380 representing approximately 60% of all new cancer cases.
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
The most frequent cancers in Zambia were cervical cancer with 3,000 new cases in 2018, followed by kaposi Sarcoma at 1,700, prostate cancer at 1,230 by breast cancer at 900. In children, the common cancers include Leukemia (cancer of the blood), Kaposi’s sarcoma (cancer of the skin), Nephroblastoma (cancer of the kidney) and Retinoblastoma (cancer of the eye).

The Patriotic Front Government under the leadership of His Excellency, Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia, has prioritized cancer prevention and control in its quest to attain Universal Health Coverage.

Some of the milestones scored under the cancer prevention and control program include setting up of 84 cervical cancer screening sites across the country and early treatment for pre-cancer abnormalities on the cervix.

In collaboration with traditional Leaders, the Ministry of Health has initiated village based cervical cancer screening programs with over 10,000 women accessing screening services in the their respective chiefdoms.

Following the approval of the National Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccination application by Gavi, HPV vaccination will be part of the routine immunization for young girls aged nationwide starting this year.

In addition, Government through the Ministry of Health in partnership with Merck Foundation, has trained three medical officers in the super-specialties of surgical oncology, paediatric medical oncology and gynaecologic oncology, offered at Tata Memorial Centre/Hospital, a Center of Excellence in cancer care in India and the region around.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,
Our country now has a Zambian paediatric medical oncologist, surgical oncologist and gynaecologic oncologist for the first time. With continued partnership from Merck Foundation six doctors will be sent to India and Egypt to specialize in various fields of oncology.

Further, two more doctors are training as gynaecologic oncologists under the University of North Carolina collaboration in collaboration with Women and Newborn Hospital.

Government has partnered with St. Jude Children’s Hospital, USA to help improve treatment outcomes in children with cancer.
The Government has also advanced plans to decentralize cancer to the rest of the country with two new cancer treatment centres planned for construction on the Copperbelt and Southern provinces. These centers when established, will significantly improve cancer services in Zambia.

We have trained over 400 health workers in cervical cancer screening since inception with more than 80,000 women screened for cervical cancer in 2018.

Government is committed to expanding cancer prevention and control programs country-wide whilst ensuring financial stability, sustainability, and quality services for all our citizens.

Distinguished Guests,
Let me take this opportunity to inform you that are here in Northwestern Province, two cervical cancer screening centres have been opened at Solwezi Urban Health Centre and Kalumbila Rural Health in Solwezi and
Kalumbila districts, respectively. The cancer screening clinics are aimed at providing cancer preventive services as close to the people as possible.

It is important to note that approximately 30-50% of cancers can be prevented by avoiding or controlling lifestyle that are known to cause cancer.

Understanding the modifiable risk factors that increase the likelihood of developing cancers such as: tobacco use, insufficient physical activity, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets, cancer associated infections and environmental factors are cardinal steps in cancer prevention.

We can also reduce our risk from many cancers by maintaining a healthy weight and being physically active. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of 10 cancers namely bowel, breast, uterine, ovarian, pancreatic, esophagus, kidney, liver, prostate and gallbladder cancers. We need to make specific changes to our diets like limiting the intake of red meat and avoiding processed meat. Alcohol is also strongly linked with and increases risk of several cancers. Reducing alcohol consumption decrease the risk of cancers of the mouth, esophagus, bowel, liver and breast (Tobacco use also increases the risk of many cancers including that of the lung, head and neck cancers, cervix and bowel).

More than a third of common cancers could be prevented by a healthy diet, being physically active and maintaining a healthy body weight. Everyone can make healthy lifestyles choices to reduce their risk of cancer.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and gentlemen

As we live healthier lifestyle and periodically screen for cancers let us remember that early detection improves outcomes for most cancers. Early detection could be the difference between successful and unsuccessful treatment. Early detection saves lives. For a number of cancers, increasing awareness of how cancer presents and the importance of timely treatment has been shown to improve survival. This is because finding cancer early almost always makes it easier to treat or even cure. Public awareness campaigns and workplace health and wellbeing initiatives are important communication platforms to raise awareness of cancer and encourage people to seek help promptly. With the right information, individuals can be encouraged to know what is normal for their body and to recognize any unusual or persistent changes.

Maintaining social support networks and talking about cancer are important strategies for coping with the social and emotional impact of cancer, both in the short and long term. This is true for both the person living with cancer and their care givers. Support can come from many sources; partners, friends, family, colleagues, healthcare professionals and counsellors with some people choosing to join self-help or support groups. The support can provide caring and supportive environment for people living with cancer to express their feelings and reduce anxiety and fear.

Distinguished Guests, The Government of Zambia with various partners and stakeholders has worked tirelessly to ensure that cancer prevention and treatment is prioritized. We have made tremendous progress in cancer prevention and control as a country.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the strong collaboration between my ministry and various cooperating partners for the support and strengthening community systems and structures for cancer control services.

It is important to note that the fight against cancer faces numerous challenges such as inadequately skilled manpower, low awareness levels and the general misconceptions that members of the public hold, which leads to late detection of the disease. However, the theme "I am and I will "highlight the ability of every individual to fight the cancer battle and challenges each and every one of us to take action. It is time to make a personal commitment to fight cancer. Challenges are however not insurmountable. The theme for this year reminds us that as a collective and as individuals we can help reduce the burden of cancer. "I am concerned and I will fight cancer."

In conclusion, the call to action in preventing cancer is asking you to stop smoking, reduce alcohol intake, increase physical activities and eat healthy diets with lots of fresh fruits and vegetables.

I thank you all and God bless!