

PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE

Wednesday, 10th June, 2026

The Senate met at Half-past Two o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS

(THE ACTING PRESIDENT OF SENATE *in the Chair*)

MOTION

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**THE MINISTER OF PROVINCIAL AFFAIRS AND
DEVOLUTION FOR HARARE METROPOLITAN PROVINCE**

(HON. SEN. TAWENGWA): Thank you Mr. President. I move that Orders of the Day, Numbers 1 to 14 on today's *Order Paper* be stood over until the rest of the Orders of the Day are disposed of.

Motion put and agreed to.

MOTION

**PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS TO DEMYSTIFY
ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND NEURODEGENERATIVE
DISORDERS**

Fifteenth Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on the prevalence of neurodegenerative-related diseases across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Question again proposed.

HON. SEN. TONGOGARA: I move that the debate do now adjourn.

HON. SEN. MOHADI: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Thursday, 11th June, 2026.

MOTION

REPORT OF THE ZIMBABWE GENDER COMMISSION FOR THE YEAR 2024

Sixteenth Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on the Report of the Zimbabwe Gender Commission for the year 2024, presented to this House of Parliament in terms of Section 323 (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

Question again proposed.

HON. SEN. TAWENGWA: I move that the debate do now adjourn.

Motion put and agreed.

Debate to resume: Thursday, 11th June, 2026.

MOTION

REPORT OF THE THEMATIC COMMITTEE ON CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE INQUIRY INTO THE STATE OF WETLANDS IN HARARE

Seventeenth Order read: Adjourned debate on motion that this House considers and adopts the Report of the Thematic Committee on Climate Change on the inquiry into the state of wetlands in Harare.

Question again proposed.

HON. SEN. MBOHWA: Thank you Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to add my voice on the report that was brought in this House by Hon. Senator Mupfumira on the Thematic Committee on Climate Change.

The inquiry into the state of wetlands in Harare was worthwhile. At the onset, I wish to commend the Committee for undertaking this important inquiry at a time when environmental sustainability, climate resilience and water security have become central pillars of national development.

Mr. President Sir, wetlands are often misunderstood as idle or undeveloped pieces of land waiting to be converted into housing, commercial premises or other forms of infrastructure. In reality, wetlands are among the most valuable natural assets that any nation can possess. They are the ecological foundations upon which sustainable urban development depends.

They regulate water flows, recharge underground aquifers, reduce the impact of floods, support biodiversity and contribute significantly to the quality and availability of water for human consumption. As we debate this report, we must move beyond viewing wetlands merely as environmental spaces. Wetlands are in fact, natural infrastructure.

Just as we protect roads, dams, bridges and power stations because they are critical to national development, we must also recognise wetlands as strategic ecological infrastructure that supports the very survival and functioning of our cities. One of the most important observations arising from this report is the direct connection between wetland preservation and water security. Harare

and surrounding areas depend on water systems whose sustainability is closely linked to the health of wetlands.

Once wetlands are degraded, the natural processes that filter them and regulate water begin to fail. There is scarcity, deteriorating water quality and rising costs associated with water treatment and supply. In this regard, wetland conservation should not be viewed as a stand-alone environmental issue. It is a matter of national development, public health and economic sustainability. Every wetland protected today contributes to securing clean and reliable water supplies for future generations.

This debate also comes at a time when climate change is presenting unprecedented challenges across the globe. Zimbabwe, like many other nations, continues to experience prolonged droughts, shifting rainfall patterns and extreme weather events. As a nation, we have made significant efforts to strengthen climate adaptation and resilience. However, one of the most cost-effective and sustainable climate adaptation measures available to us is the protection of our natural ecosystems.

Wetlands act as nature's buffer against climate shocks. During periods of heavy rainfall, they absorb excess water and reduce flooding. During dry periods, they help sustain water flows and recharge groundwater reserves. In essence, wetlands serve as natural insurance systems against the growing uncertainties associated with climate change.

For this reason, the recommendations contained in this report should be viewed not merely as environmental interventions but as climate adaptation strategies that contribute directly towards the achievement of Vision 2030 and the aspirations of the National Development Strategy.

Mr. President, I was particularly struck by the broader economic implications of wetland degradation. Too often, environmental protection is incorrectly portrayed as conflicting with development. Yet the reality is that environmental degradation imposes substantial economic costs on society. When wetlands are destroyed, communities become more vulnerable to flooding. Infrastructure suffers damage. Water treatment costs increase. Public health challenges become more severe.

Local authorities are compelled to spend more resources addressing environmental emergencies that could have been prevented through proper conservation measures. Consequently, the question before us is not whether we should choose between development and environmental protection. Rather, it is how we achieve development that is sustainable, inclusive and environmentally responsible.

True development must leave future generations with stronger ecological systems than those inherited. Development that undermines water security, increases disaster risks and weakens environmental resilience is unsustainable development. This report also presents an opportunity for us to strengthen environmental governance and community participation. Environmental protection cannot be the sole responsibility of Government agencies. Every citizen has a role to play in safeguarding our heritage.

Communities living near wetlands should be empowered to become active custodians of these ecosystems. Educational institutions, residents, associations, traditional leaders, faith-based organisations and youth groups should all be encouraged to

participate in environmental stewardship programmes. When communities understand the value of wetlands, they become the first line of defence against environmental degradation.

Furthermore, there is a need to embrace innovative approaches that transform wetlands from perceived obstacles to development into assets that generate value for communities. Eco-tourism initiatives, community parks, environmental education centres and green recreational spaces can create employment opportunities while preserving ecological integrity. Such approaches demonstrate that conservation and economic development can complement one another.

Mr. President, the Constitution of Zimbabwe places a responsibility upon all of us to safeguard the environment for present and future generations. Environmental protection is therefore not merely a policy choice. It is a constitutional obligation. We are custodians of resources that do not belong exclusively to us, but are held in trust for generations yet unborn. Future Zimbabweans will judge us not by the number of speeches we delivered, but by the quality of the natural heritage we leave behind. They will judge

whether we had the foresight to protect critical ecosystems before they were irreversibly damaged.

The enquiry undertaken by the Committee serves as a timely reminder that environmental stewardship and national development are inseparable. A nation that protects its wetlands protects its water resources. A nation that protects its water resources protects its agriculture, public health and future prosperity.

In conclusion, I fully support the recommendation contained in this report. I particularly welcome the proposals aimed at strengthening legal protection for wetlands, improving interagency coordination, enhancing community participation, restoring degraded ecosystems and promoting sustainable alternatives that balance environmental conservation with economic development. Wetlands are not vacant spaces awaiting development, they are strategic national assets that sustain life, support economic growth and strengthen climate resilience. Their protection is therefore not simply an environmental priority. It is a national imperative.

With these remarks, Mr. President, I do submit my contribution, and I support the adoption of the report. I thank you.

***HON. SEN. SHIRI:** Thank you Mr. President. Let me take this opportunity to thank Hon. Sen. Mupfumira and her Committee for the motion that she gave on the issue of wetlands in our country. I would like to thank them for teaching and enlightening as leaders on how we can preserve our wetlands. In our country, we have 3.96% to 34.96% of wetlands. We used to grow rice in wetlands without any irrigation because wetlands are good. We saw some springs in Chipinge, similar to those we last saw in other areas years back, with clean water.

These wetlands are good for us when we talk about issues related to ecosystems. Growing up, we were told about birds that would come from other countries, staying in wetlands. Those birds, some of us know them, the cattle egret *mafudzamombe*. Those birds would come to the wetlands in our area. So, animals would live in those wetlands. They are treated worldwide with importance. Nonetheless, because of a lack of knowledge, we see people herding cattle in wetlands, thereby destroying the area and causing

overgrazing and destroying the vegetation there. There are a lot of things that destroy wetlands, such as building infrastructure in areas that are not designated for that. We must safeguard our wetlands because they assist us a lot in our day-to-day living.

Some of the wetlands may flood. They flood permanently or it depends on the seasons. Some who are into herbs, they would know or refer you to go and look for a certain herb in wetlands, which means that they know that a certain herb can only be found in those wetlands that assist us in our health. Even fish can be found there. Some of these wetlands, you find them where rivers meet. It assists us as a country to understand that we benefit a lot by having wetlands. Most of the people are destroying these wetlands due to a lack of knowledge or maybe they just want to do it. It helps us to get a lot of water. The issues that we are now facing relate to climate change, sometimes we do not understand them. We have destroyed some of the things that we should be protecting and safeguarding the wetlands.

Some people just come and clear a land even if they do not have the importance or a certain reason for what they want to use that piece of land for. I think we have a ministry that must raise awareness

pertaining to issues of wetlands and their importance and what their uses are in our lives. About 60% of these were destroyed. Those that are remaining, let us preserve them so that we are able to get clean air, water and able to protect the issue of climate change. These days, children do not even know ducks because they are no longer found, especially the wild ones. We have destroyed our environment. We are no longer sustaining and living within it.

I would like to say that, Hon. Members and the Committee, you have a huge responsibility to bring it back and as the law, we keep on revising and trying to see how we can uplift our communities. The issues related to uplifting our communities are something that started worldwide in 1971. That is why we have international treaties on issues related to wetlands, issues to safeguard our environment, and as a country, we formulate laws that support us so that we do not destroy wetlands. As leaders, we have a great responsibility to be the eyes so that people do not continue destroying these wetlands.

We have a duty to remind those who are erecting buildings where they are not supposed to be. They are affecting wildlife and

even themselves. I am in full support of this report which is very important to us.

HON. SEN. MUPFUMIRA: I move that the debate do now adjourn.

HON. SEN. MOHADI: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Thursday, 11th June, 2026.

MOTION

ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION TO PROHIBIT ACCESS TO HARMFUL COMMERCIAL SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO CHILDREN UNDER SIXTEEN.

Eighteenth Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on unrestricted access to social media platforms by children.

Question again proposed.

HON. SEN. TSOMONDO: Thank you Mr. President. I rise to support the motion raised by Hon. Sen. Mupfumira on the need to protect children from the harmful effects of unrestricted access to social media platforms. The digital age has brought

many benefits, including improved communication, access to educational resources and increased connectivity.

However, these benefits have been accompanied by serious challenges, particularly for children. Social media platforms have become avenues through which children are exposed to cyberbullying, online predators, misinformation, harmful content, addictive behaviour and mental health problems.

Many schools have reported cases where learners have been victims of cyberbullying through WhatsApp groups and other social media platforms. Some children have suffered emotional distress after being ridiculed, threatened or exposed to inappropriate content online. There have also been increasing reports of online scams and exploitation targeting young people who lack the maturity and experience to identify digital threats.

Mr. President, the Constitution of Zimbabwe places an obligation on the State to protect children from abuse and exploitation. Therefore, it is appropriate for Parliament to consider legislative measures that create a safer online environment for our young people.

In support of this motion, I wish to make the following recommendations: The Ministry of Information Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services should spearhead the development of a comprehensive national framework on child online protection. The Ministry should work with internet service providers and social media companies to strengthen age verification systems and establish mechanisms for reporting harmful content.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should integrate digital literacy, cyber safety and responsible social media usage into the school curriculum. Learners should be taught how to identify online threats, protect their personal information and use technology responsibly.

The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, through child protection services, should establish community-based programmes to educate parents and guardians on monitoring children's online activities. Many parents are unaware of the risks associated with social media and require support to guide their children effectively.

The Ministry of Health and Child Care should strengthen mental health programmes targeting young people affected by cyberbullying, social media addiction and online abuse. Schools and communities should have access to counselling services for children experiencing psychological distress linked to digital platforms.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage, through the Zimbabwe Republic Police, Cybercrime Unit, should enhance investigations and enforcement against individuals involved in online child exploitation, cyberbullying and digital crimes targeting minors.

Furthermore, the Government should encourage mobile network operators to provide affordable parental control tools and child-friendly internet packages that limit access to harmful content.

Protecting children online is not about denying their access to technology. Rather, it is about creating safeguards that allow them to enjoy the benefits of the digital world while minimising the risks. As legislators, we have a responsibility to ensure that

technological advancement does not compromise the safety, wellbeing and future of our children. For these reasons, I fully support this motion and urge this honourable Senate to adopt it together with practical measures involving all relevant ministries and stakeholders. I thank you Mr. President.

HON. SEN. MUPFUMIRA: I move that the debate do now adjourn.

HON. SEN. MOHADI: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Thursday, 11th June, 2026.

MOTION

ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROGRAMME TO PROTECT AND GROW ZIMBABWE'S NATIONAL HERD

Nineteenth Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on recurring outbreaks of livestock diseases.

Question again proposed.

HON. SEN. MAVENYENGWA: I move that the debate do now adjourn.

HON. SEN. MOHADI: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Thursday, 11th June, 2026.

MOTION

RESUSCITATION OF THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Twentieth Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on challenges faced by Zimbabwe's manufacturing sector as a result of prolonged de-industrialisation.

Question again proposed.

HON. SEN. KATUMBA: I move that the debate do now adjourn.

HON. SEN. ZVIDZAI: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Thursday, 11th June, 2026.

MOTION

STIFFER PENALTIES FOR PERPETRATORS OF CHILD

MARRIAGES

Twenty-first Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on the prevalence of early child marriages and teenage pregnancies among

communities

Question again proposed.

***HON. SEN. MWANZA:** Thank you Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to support the motion by Hon. Sen. Chakabuda on early child marriages and teenage pregnancies. A child at the age of 14 must not be thinking about where she will get relish or nappies; that child must be thinking of how she can solve maths. This affects parents as well when they see their children getting married or impregnated at a tender age. This is caused by poverty in the country. A child chooses to go after her boyfriend who gives her money to buy snacks because she will be running away from the poverty at home. Sometimes, older men are the ones who are assisting in destroying the future of the children. So, it is now difficult for a parent or a family to earn a living. So, if you have an indisciplined child, you will be lost in search of better things. Again, other families or parents think that marrying off a child to a rich person will alleviate their poverty. Some will be afraid to be a laughing stock if a child is impregnated so as to avoid the embarrassment, they end up forcing the child into marriage.

Our girl child also thinks that getting married is an achievement. Also, these men who impregnate these children, in trying to escape jail terms, end up forcing the child into marriage but as time moves, the marriage does not last because the child is immature. Mr.

President, my prayer is for the Government to assist in prosecuting or disciplining those culprits who are marrying or impregnating these young children. I suggest that those young children who would have been impregnated be assisted so that the pregnancy to be terminated and also be allowed to proceed with their school studies. They must conduct thorough research to find out why children are being impregnated or married at a younger age. These issues of child marriages are on the rise. There must be a law that protects these children so they can proceed with their education. Education empowers these children and their future will be bright. Without education, it is poverty for life because education helps one to get employed or be self-employed. If you get married at a young age without attaining an education, you will be someone dependent on your husband. Men will take advantage of that and abuse you. Therefore, Mr. President, people must be arrested for child marriages.

We are asking that the Government assists with food programmes at secondary schools so that other children will not lust for other people's food. This will protect them from engaging into sexual relationships to sustain them. Nowadays, parents spend most of their time on their phones rather than talking to their children. Parents must encourage each other to not spend most of their time on phones. It has destroyed our country. Yes, poverty is there but that is not the only way to beat it. Let us engage pastors and/or chiefs to bring back our culture because our country can develop by protecting the youth. An unplanned pregnancy does not bring a strong marriage but it ends. Thank you Mr. President.

HON. SEN. MAVENYENGWA: Mr. President, I rise to support this motion which was brought to this House by Hon. Sen. Chakabuda on child marriages. This is not just a social issue; this is a constitutional crisis, a human rights violation and a direct assault on the future of Zimbabwe. Let us be clear from the outset, child marriage is illegal in Zimbabwe. Anyone under the age of 18 cannot get married. Section 78 of the Constitution is straightforward. It provides that no person under the age of 18 may enter into marriage

and that every marriage must be entered into with free and full consent. The Marriages Act [Chapter 5:17] reinforces this position without any exception. Despite this clarity in our laws, one in every three girls in Zimbabwe is married before the age of 18, according to statistics. This is not a legal gap; this is a failure of enforcement.

Across all communities, particularly in rural areas, child marriage and teenage pregnancies have become normalised realities. Girls are being married off due to poverty and food insecurity, forced into unions under the cover of culture and religion and exploited by older men taking advantage of their vulnerability. Evidence shows that poverty, lack of education, weak law enforcement and harmful cultural practices are the major drivers of child marriage in Zimbabwe. When a family cannot afford school fees, when a child lacks necessities, marriage becomes a coping mechanism. Let us be clear, poverty must never be an excuse for abuse. The consequences of child marriage and teenage pregnancies are severe and far-reaching. Nearly all girls married before the age of 18 give birth before they become 20 years.

Many are forced to drop out of school prematurely. They face increased risks of maternal mortality and childbirth complications. They become trapped in lifelong cycles of poverty and dependence. When a girl child is married, we do not just lose a learner; we lose a future nurse, a teacher, a lawyer and a leader. Mr. President, the House must have the courage to confront unforgettable truths: some religious sects, some community practices and in some cases, even parents and guardians are explicit in perpetuating child marriages. Let it be said without hesitation, culture cannot override our Constitution. Religion cannot justify an illegality. The Constitution of Zimbabwe is the supreme law and it must be upheld without compromise. Mr. President, while Zimbabwe has made commendable progress in aligning its laws, critical gaps remain; weak enforcement and inconsistent punishment of offenders, limited access to sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and inadequate support systems for survivors; the absence of a full operational and funded national action plan following its lapse. Without addressing these gaps, the law will remain powerful on paper but weak in practice.

Zimbabwe can learn from other countries that have made significant progress. An example is Malawi, which has taken decisive steps by constitutionally banning child marriage without any exceptions. Aligning all laws to set 18 as the minimum age of marriage. Implementing community-based child protection committees. Reinstating and funding a comprehensive national action plan actively involving traditional leaders in ending child marriages, including annulling illegal unions, especially in rural Zimbabwe. As a result, Malawi has seen notable reductions in child marriage prevalence through strong enforcement and community ownership. The lesson is clear that laws must be enforced, communities must be engaged and resources must be committed. The motion calls for decisive action and rightly so.

Firstly, we must strengthen enforcement. Perpetrators must be arrested or prosecuted and sentenced consistently to send a clear message or a deterrent measure to the big offenders. Secondly, we must intensify awareness campaigns. The Ministers of Primary and Secondary Education and Health and Child Care must take the lead in

educating communities that child marriage is a crime and a violation of human rights.

Thirdly, we must protect the girl child through education. Girls should not drop out of school due to pregnancy or poverty and mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure that retention in school for girls who are affected by early child marriage.

Fourthly, we must provide adequate resources. This House must urge the Ministry of Finance to allocate sufficient funding to programmes aimed at ending child marriage and supporting survivors of this early marriage.

Finally, we must revive and fully fund a comprehensive national action plan on ending child marriage and ensure a coordinated multi-sectoral response. If we fail to act, we become complicit. If we delay, we sacrifice another generation. Let this House stand firm today and declare that no child in Zimbabwe will be forced into marriage. No child will be denied an education, health and dignity of this country will not only exist but will be enforced. I submit.

HON. SEN. MLOTSHWA: Thank you Mr. President, for allowing me to add my voice. I have realised that most of what I

wanted to say has been said by most members in this House. I think we all agree that child marriage is an abomination. We must not allow it; we must not accept it as a country and as a people.

THE ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE: Pardon?

Can you speak to your mic, please?

HON. SEN. MLOTSHWA: Oh! I am speaking to it now. I rise to support this motion and do so with the seriousness it deserves. This is not merely a marriage debate or a debate about pregnancy but a debate about the future of Zimbabwe. It is a debate about whether we are prepared as a House to protect our children or whether we will continue to fail them through silence, inaction and selective enforcement of the law.

Mr. President, every time a child is forced into a marriage, Zimbabwe loses. Every time a girl drops out of school because of pregnancy, Zimbabwe loses. Every time a child is denied the opportunity to reach her full potential because adults fail to protect her, Zimbabwe loses. The tragedy of child marriage and teenage pregnancy is that they rob children of their childhood, deny them opportunities and condemn many of them to lifelong poverty.

As legislators, we have a constitutional obligation to protect the vulnerable. We cannot therefore, remain silent when children are being met under the guise of culture, religion, poverty or tradition.

Our Constitution is very clear. Section 81 of the Constitution provides that every child has a right to be protected from economic and sexual exploitation. It further provides that the best interests of the child are paramount in every matter concerning the child. The Constitution does not say the best interests of culture are paramount. It does not say the best interests of religious sects are paramount. It does not say that the best interests of parents are paramount and it does not say that the best interests of the child are paramount.

The constitutional principle alone should guide our debate today. Section 78 of the Constitution further provides that every person who has attained the age of 18 years has the right to have a family. The implication is clear. Children cannot marry, children should not marry and children must not marry. The Marriage Act reinforces this constitutional position by setting 18 years as the minimum age of marriage. The law is therefore settled. The Constitution is settled. The challenge before us is implementation.

Why do child marriages continue despite constitutional protections? Why do teenage pregnancies continue at alarming levels despite existing laws? Why are some communities still sacrificing the future of the girls? These are the questions we must answer.

One of the greatest mistakes we make as a society is treating child marriages as a cultural issue rather than as a child protection issue. Culture evolves. Culture cannot override constitutional rights. Senator Mavyenyengwa said the same. Culture cannot override human dignity. Culture cannot override the rights of children.

Throughout history, societies have abandoned harmful practices once they realised the damage they caused. There was a time when many harmful practices were defended in the name of culture. Today, we reject them because we understand that human rights must prevail. The same principle must apply here. No culture should justify marrying a child. No culture should justify impregnating a child. No culture should justify depriving a child of education.

Mr. President, as I debate and go further, I am a mother of girls. Sometimes when I put my daughter on a status, you find an Hon. Member asking, “Is that your child”? I am ready to pay lobola. Then

you ask yourself if an adult person asks such a question, one thing I always tell them is that it is a joke in bad taste. You might be joking, but maybe in your joke, you are telling the truth. It is a joke in bad taste. How do you look at a child and salivate for that child and want that child? You want to even insinuate that you want to marry the child? It does not make sense. Why, when I put a status, you say you want to marry me because I am an adult, I can deal with you. When a child cannot deal with you and the consequences that come with the pregnancies, disease and every other thing, we have made this culture of wanting children cultural to us.

It is wrong and we must condemn it at every level possible. We must also confront the uncomfortable truth that some adults are using religion as a shield for exploitation. There are religious sects that continue to facilitate child marriages and that we see in modern days in Zimbabwe; Hon. Senator Tongogara alluded to that as well. The implementation of the law must be taken seriously. This House must take it seriously that we implement a law against child marriage. Some sects discourage education and modern health services.

Such practices violate both the Constitution and the law.

Religious freedom is protected in Zimbabwe. However, religious freedom does not include the freedom to abuse children. Religious freedom does not include the freedom to violate constitutional rights. Religious freedom does not include the freedom to expose children to sexual exploitation. The State must therefore, act decisively wherever children are being harmed regardless of who the perpetrators are.

Mr. President, poverty is another major driver of child marriages and teenage pregnancies. In many communities, struggling families see marriages as a survival strategy. Some parents believe marrying off their daughter will reduce the economic burden on the family. Others accept bride price as a form of economic relief but let us ask ourselves, does child marriage eliminate poverty? The answer is no. It merely transfers poverty from one generation to another.

A girl who leaves school prematurely is less likely to secure meaningful employment. She is more likely to remain economically dependent. She is more likely to experience long-term poverty and her children are also more likely to face the same disadvantages. Thus, child marriage does not solve poverty it reproduces poverty. If we are

serious about ending child marriages, we must also address the poverty that drives them.

Mr. President, education remains the most powerful weapon against child marriages and teenage pregnancies. An educated girl is more likely to delay marriage; an educated girl is more likely to participate in the economy; an educated girl is more likely to make informed decisions about her future and an educated girl is more likely to break cycles of poverty. That is why every child marriage is also an attack on education. It is an attack on national development. It is an attack on the future workforce of this country.

I, therefore, call upon the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, to intensify programmes aimed at keeping girls in school.

I think Mr. President; we must copy our neighbours Zambia for making primary education free. Schools must become safe spaces. Schools must have guidance and counselling programmes. Schools must strengthen life skills education. Schools must provide learners with information that empowers them to make responsible decisions.

Mr. President, we must also speak honestly about teenage pregnancies. While some teenage pregnancies may result from

consensual relationships between minors, many are a result of exploitation by adults. Many involve the abuse of power, older men taking advantage of vulnerable girls, coercion and economic manipulation and many involve criminal conduct. We must therefore stop treating all teenage pregnancies as mere social problems. Many are criminal matters.

Many involve violation of children's rights. Law enforcement agencies, Mr. President, must therefore investigate such cases thoroughly. Adults who prey on children must face the full consequences of the law. Senator Tongogara said they must be arrested in winter so that they feel the full wrath of prisons when it is very cold. Mr. President, the health implications of teenage pregnancies are severe. Young girls face higher risk during pregnancies and childbirth. Their bodies are often not fully developed. They face increased risk of complications; some suffer permanent injuries, experience severe psychological trauma, lose their babies and some lose their own lives. These are not theoretical concerns Mr. President.

They are realities faced by many girls across the country. The Minister of Health and Child Care must therefore, strengthen adolescent reproductive health programmes. Mr. President, health facilities must become centres of protection and support. Health workers must be trained to identify vulnerable children and ensure that appropriate interventions are made. I think this will also help, as we count on the teachers who get engaged with children on a day-to-day basis. They might see that this child is vulnerable and might also ensure that the appropriate interventions are made.

Mr. President, I also wish to emphasise the mental health dimension of this crisis. When we discuss child marriages and teenage pregnancies, we often focus on the physical consequences. We rarely discuss emotional and psychological consequences.

Many young girls suffer depression, experience anxiety, suffer from trauma, lose confidence and self-worth; many feel isolated and abandoned. These invisible wounds often last longer than physical injuries. Our national response must therefore, include psychological support services.

Mr. President, these Houses over the years have debated many health-related motions. We have debated maternal health, access to healthcare, mental health and reproductive health. We have debated the strengthening of our health systems.

This motion should not be viewed in isolation; rather, it should form a broader national effort to improve health outcomes and protect vulnerable citizens. The reforms we seek through the health legislation must be accompanied by stronger child protection mechanisms. Mr. President, awareness campaigns are important. However, awareness alone, Mr. President, is not enough. We have had awareness campaigns over the years. The challenge is implementation, enforcement and accountability. The other challenge is ensuring that institutions work together. Schools, clinics, social welfare departments, traditional leaders, churches, communities and law enforcement agencies, Mr. President, must all work together. Child protection cannot be left to one Ministry alone. It requires the world of Government approach. It requires the whole of society approach.

Mr. President, traditional leaders have a particularly important role to play. Chiefs, headmen and village heads remain influential in many communities Mr. President. They are the custodians of culture and the guardians of community values. They can therefore, be powerful allies in the fight against child marriages. I urge traditional leaders to become champions for the rights of children.

I urge them to reject practices that harm children. I urge them to report cases of child marriage and exploitation whenever they occur. Mr. President, parents also have responsibilities. As parents, we have responsibilities. Children should not become victims of decisions made by adults. Parents are supposed to protect their children. They are supposed to nurture their children as parents are also supposed to guide our children. Any parent who facilitates the marriage of a child is failing in that responsibility. Any guardian who knowingly allows the exploitation of a child must be held accountable.

Mr. President, I strongly support the call for stiffer penalties against perpetrators. The law must send a clear message. Anyone who exploits a child must know that, that is a violation of the law. However, penalties alone, Mr. President, will not solve the problem.

We must improve reporting mechanisms. We must strengthen investigations.

We must ensure that prosecutions are effective, and we must ensure that justice is delivered swiftly. Mr. President, Parliament also has a responsibility beyond passing laws. Our oversight role requires us as Parliament to ensure that existing laws are implemented. Too often in this country, we pass excellent legislation but fail in implementation. As Parliament, we must demand regular reports from the Ministries of Primary and Secondary Education, Health and Child Care, Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage, and Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs on the progress being made in combating child marriages and teenage pregnancies. We must ask difficult questions, Mr. President.

We must demand evidence and we must insist on measurable results. Parliament is not an extension of the Executive. Our constitutional duty is to ensure that Government programmes are working and that the rights guaranteed under our Constitution are protected.

Mr. President, as I conclude, allow me to remind this House that history will not judge us by the motions passed, the speeches we delivered or the laws we enacted. History will judge us by whether the children of Zimbabwe were safer because we sat in this Chamber. It will judge us by whether a girl in Tsholotsho, Binga, Beitbridge, Gokwe, Mutoko, Chipinge, Maphisa, Matobo, Gwanda or any corner of our Republic was able to remain in school because Parliament acted.

It will judge us by whether we had the courage to confront harmful practices even when they were defended in the name of culture, religion or tradition. Madam President, every child marriage represents a collective failure of society and a failure of Parliament as well. Every teenage pregnancy that results from exploitation is not merely a personal tragedy; it is a national tragedy. For every girl forced into marriage, we lose a teacher, a nurse, a doctor, an engineer, a lawyer, a parliamentarian, in short Zimbabwe loses.

The true wealth of this nation is not found beneath our soil, in our gold, in our lithium, platinum and in our diamonds. The greatest resource Zimbabwe possesses is its children. If we cannot protect

them, then all our talk of Vision 2030, industrialisation, economic transformation and national development becomes meaningless.

Mr. President, there can be no prosperous Zimbabwe built on broken childhoods. There can be no upper-middle-income economy built on girls forced out of classrooms. There can be no national development while children are raising children. The Constitution has spoken, the law has spoken, the courts have spoken, science has spoken and common humanity has spoken. What remains is for us to act. Let this Senate today send a message, so clear that it reaches every village, church, school, household and every corner of Zimbabwe: A child is not a bride, a child is not a wife, a child is not a source of income and a child is not an object to be exchanged in the name of culture or religion. Mr. President, a child is not a commodity; a child is a child and every child deserves protection. Also, every child deserves education, dignity, opportunity and hope.

Mr. President, if there is one cause upon which this House should stand united regardless of political affiliation, tribe, region, religion or ideology, it is the protection of our children. For when we protect the child, we protect the nation. When we educate the girl

child, we transform generations. When we end child marriages, we strengthen families. When we reduce teenage pregnancies, we strengthen communities. When we keep girls in school, we strengthen our economy and when we defend the rights of every child, we strengthen the Republic of Zimbabwe itself.

I, therefore, support this motion without reservation and call upon this House not merely to pass it but to become its guardians until every child in Zimbabwe is free from the threat of child marriage, exploitation and abuse. Let future generations say that when the children of Zimbabwe needed defenders, this Senate stood up and answered the call.

I thank you.

***HON. SEN. CHAKABUDA:** Thank you Mr. President of Senate Sir. I just want to wind up the motion in my name. I stand to thank all the Hon. Senators who contributed to the debate on the motion on child pregnancies and early child marriages. We learnt a lot of things and I hope that as legislators, we will be able to go back and share what we learnt with our constituents. In short, I take once

again this opportunity to thank all Hon. Senators for supporting this motion.

Motion that:

CONCERNED at the prevalence of early child marriages and teenage pregnancies among communities despite provisions of the Constitution and the Marriages Act [*Chapter 5:17*] which seek to eradicate this scourge in Zimbabwe;

DISTURBED by health risks and economic disadvantages associated with child marriages and teenage pregnancies, particularly the elevated risks of maternal and infant mortality resulting from childbirth complications, as well as the high prevalence of school drop-outs among the affected;

FURTHER DISTURBED that some religious sects, communities and parents/guardians are often complicit in perpetuating the scourge due to cultural beliefs:

NOW, THEREFORE, calls upon this House to—

- (a) condemn child marriages and teenage pregnancies among communities,

- (b) implore the Ministries of Primary and Secondary Education and Health and Child Care to conduct awareness campaigns on child marriages and teenage pregnancies; and
- (c) advocate for stiffer penalties for perpetrators above the legal age of majority be, put and agreed to.

MOTION

REPORT OF THE JOINT PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AND THEMATIC COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND HERITAGE ON THE STATE OF OUR HERITAGE, CULTURE AND MONUMENTS

Twenty- Second Order read: Adjourned debate on motion on report of the Joint Portfolio Committee on Tourism and Hospitality Industry and Thematic Committee on Culture and Heritage on the state of our heritage, culture and monuments in relation to Zimbabwe's tourism.

Question again proposed.

***HON. SEN. CHIEF NECHOMBO:** Thank you Hon.

President of Senate Sir. I stand to wind the debate and move that

the motion be now adopted. I want to thank all the Hon. Senators for their contributions. A very insightful debate on our national monuments and what is expected so that we will continue to preserve our national monuments. It is my view that all the contributions will be looked at so that we can come up with ideas as to how to preserve our national monuments. With these few words, I move that the Senate adopt the motion.

Motion that this Senate considers and adopts the report of the Joint Portfolio Committee on Tourism and Hospitality Industry and Thematic Committee on Culture and Heritage on the state of our heritage, culture and monuments in relation to Zimbabwe's tourism, put and agreed to.

MOTION

PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH: DEBATE ON ADDRESS

Twenty-Third Order read: Adjourned debate on motion in reply to the Presidential Speech.

Question again proposed.

HON. SEN. HUNGWE: Thank you Mr. President. I would like to say a few words regarding the address made by the President of our

country. He spoke to Parliament about the tasks we need to complete and the motions we must address. However, I want to focus on the issue of drug abuse among children and youth as other matters have already been discussed.

I see that this Parliament faces challenges in addressing the drug problem. The First Lady has been actively working to combat drug abuse among our youth but she cannot do this alone. As Hon. Senators, elected leaders, we must consider forming small groups dedicated to supporting youths who are struggling with drug addiction. The increasing number of young people using drugs is alarming and it contributes to serious issues such as child marriages and teenage pregnancies.

I propose that Parliament explores ways to assist each Hon. Senator in their respective provinces. Can we establish facilities for children dealing with drug addiction, similar to the initiatives led by the First Lady? I have visited a centre in Mbare with her, where we saw that some of the youths there were graduates, doctors and lawyers who had fallen into substance abuse.

However, after receiving the necessary support and training, many were able to recover and regain their lives. While other Hon. Senators have shared their thoughts on various issues, I sincerely hope we can work together to find solutions for every province.

Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to the President for continuing his speech during the recent State of the Nation Address (SONA) despite the electricity being switched off. His determination to proceed without interruption is commendable. However, I must emphasize that such disruptions are concerning. I heard some Hon. Senators express their concerns about safety during these events. We do not want to experience such situations again, as they have occurred in the past. If this happens again, those responsible should face severe consequences. The organisers of these events must ensure they are adequately prepared for potential power outages. We should have generators that activate immediately when the electricity goes off.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that we do not want to witness such incidents in the future, as they reflect a lack of respect for the President of our country. Thank you.

HON. SEN. MUZENDA: I move that the debate do now adjourn.

HON. SEN. RUNGANI: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Thursday, 11th June, 2026.

*On the motion of **HON. SEN. MUZENDA**, seconded by **HON. SEN. RUNGANI**, the Senate adjourned at Ten Minutes past Four o'clock p.m.*