

PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE

Tuesday, 7th July, 2026

The National Assembly met at a Quarter-past Two o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS

(THE HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER *in the Chair*)

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER

PETITION RECEIVED FROM T. GUMBORESHUMBA

HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I wish to inform the House that on 9th June 2026, Parliament received a petition from Mr. T Gumboreshumba of Gumboreshumba Village under Chief Chivero in Mhondoro, requesting Parliament to urgently intervene by stopping the dissemination of monuments and cultural heritage sites of the First Chimurenga heroes, namely Gumboreshumba and Chief Chinengundu Mashayamombe.

The petitioner also beseeched Parliament to facilitate the shift of the dam site and investigate activities of Pan-Africa Mining Private Limited in relation to their interests within the area. The petition was deemed inadmissible as it requests Parliament to perform a function outside its mandate.

HON. MAONEKE: Good afternoon Madam Speaker. I rise today on a point of national interest to move a motion of sincere appreciation and profound gratitude to His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, Dr. E. D. Mnangagwa, for his vision and leadership, compassion and swift intervention regarding the repatriation of our fellow citizens from South Africa, a demonstration of true statesmanship and in fulfilment of his philosophy that no one and no place shall be left behind. His Excellency has opened the doors of our motherland wide to welcome all returning Zimbabweans.

Madam Speaker, the House must take note of the unprecedented administrative waivers and social safety nets the President has instituted to ensure a dignified return for our compatriots. The President has graciously waived, among other duties, customs and excise, duties on motor vehicles, professional equipment and personal valuables to ensure that returnees can bring back the tools of their trade and their hard-earned assets to contribute immediately to our national economy.

On educational integration, His Excellency has directed that all schools accommodate returning students unconditionally to ensure

that the education of our children is not disrupted by the tradition, welfare and logistics the Government has been tasked to provide essential transport, food and medical assistance to ensure that no returnee suffers from hunger or lack of care during the repatriation process.

Community integration is a powerful move for social cohesion. All village heads and traditional leaders have been instructed to welcome and accommodate returnees unconditionally, ensuring that they are reintegrated into the social fabric of their ancestral homes. This gesture is a testament to the fact that Zimbabwe is a home for all its children. It reflects a leadership that is empathetic to the plight of its people and proactive in safeguarding their dignity.

I, therefore, request that this House joins me in expressing its deepest gratitude to President Dr. E. D. Mnangagwa for his fatherly care and for providing a seamless pathway home for our citizens. So, I submit.

HON. V. MOYO: Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise on a point of national interest regarding the progress of the rehabilitation, upgrading, widening and dualisation of sections of the Bulawayo-

Victoria Falls Highway, one of Zimbabwe's most strategic transport corridors serving the tourism sector, mining industry, local communities and regional trade. On 1st October 2024, Cabinet announced its approval of the modernisation of the Beitbridge-Bulawayo-Victoria Falls Road through a public-private partnership framework, marking a significant milestone towards addressing the deteriorating state of the critical highway. Subsequently, in April 2025, Cabinet further directed that the project framework be expanded to include seven additional contractors to accelerate the implementation with the ambitious target of completing the works by December 2026. However, despite these commitments, it is reported that only approximately 60 kilometres of the 440-kilometre section from Bulawayo to Victoria Falls has been completed to date. This level of progress raises serious concerns as to whether the project remains on course to meet its stated completion deadline.

We now have less than four months before the onset of the rainy season. If substantial progress is not achieved before the rains begin, construction activities are likely to slow down considerably, further delaying completion while exposing road users to deteriorating road

conditions, increased accidents, higher vehicle maintenance costs and disruptions to tourism, mining, agriculture and cross-border trade. I, therefore, call upon the Minister of Transport and Infrastructure Development to provide Parliament and the nation at large with an updated progress report on this flagship infrastructure project.

Specifically, I seek clarification on the status of works on the 440 kilometres from Bulawayo to Victoria Falls section. The reasons for the apparent slow pace of implementation, the measures being taken to accelerate construction before the rainy season and lastly, whether the December 2026 completion target remains achievable. The people of Victoria Falls, Hwange West at large, Matabeleland North Province and the nation at large, deserve assurance that this strategically important project will be completed within the promised timeframe given its importance to road safety, economic growth and the tourism industry. I so submit.

THE HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you Hon. V. Moyo.

The message will be conveyed to the responsible Minister.

MOTION

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

HON. TOGAREPI: Thank you Madam Speaker, I move that Orders of the Day, Numbers 1 to 2, be stood over until Order of the Day Number 3 has been disposed of.

HON. C. MOYO: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

CONSIDERATION STAGE

CLIMATE CHANGE MANAGEMENT BILL [H. B. 5A, 2025]

Third Order read: Consideration Stage: Climate Change Management Bill [H. B. 5A, 2025].

Amendments to Clauses 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 18 and 37 put and agreed to.

Bill, as amended, adopted.

Third Reading: With leave, forthwith.

HON. HAMAUSWA: I just wanted you to guide us, Madam Speaker, whether we were not supposed to go for the Committee again.

Maybe just to clarify so that we know the amendments. You can guide us.

THE HON. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. Hamauswa, we already passed that stage.

THIRD READING

CLIMATE CHANGE MANAGEMENT BILL [H. B. 5A, 2025]

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND WILDLIFE (HON. E. NDLOVU): Thank you Madam Speaker. I move that the Bill be now read the third time.

Motion put and agreed to.

Bill read the third time.

MOTION

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

HON. TOGAREPI: Madam Speaker, I move that we revert to Orders of the Day Number 1 on today's *Order Paper*.

HON. C. MOYO: I second.

Motion put and agreed to.

SECOND READING

BIOLOGICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS CRIMES BILL [H. B. 9,
2025]

First Order read: Biological and Toxin Weapons Crimes Bill [H. B. 9, 2025].

Question again proposed.

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (HON. MUCHINGURI-KASHIRI): Madam Speaker, I rise to present the Second Reading speech of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Crimes Bill [H. B. 9, 2025]. This Bill presents a historic opportunity for Zimbabwe to fully domesticate and give legal effect to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) of 10th April 1972, to which Zimbabwe acceded to on 5th November 1990. The Convention categorically prohibits the development, production, stockpiling, acquisition, retention and deployment of biological agents, toxins and weapons as instruments of warfare.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Defence currently administers the Chemical Weapons Prohibition Act, [*Chapter 11.18*], which domesticated the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1998 and outlawed chemical agents as weapons of war. Given the deep technical and legal commonalities between these two regimes, this Bill seeks to harmonise our national oversight. It consolidates

administration under a single, unified National Advisory Committee, optimising regulatory resources and eliminating institutional fragmentation.

Furthermore, the Bill recognises and preserves the complementary roles of existing institutions. It expressly recognises the Environmental Management Agency, established under the Environmental Management Act, [*Chapter 20. 27*]. Under Clause 14, inspectors and analysts will be drawn from EMA, health bodies and other specialised State institutions to prevent, detect and investigate offences. This collaborative framework ensures that enforcement builds directly upon established domestic expertise, promoting seamless inter-agency coordination.

Madam Speaker, biological weapons consist of disease-causing organisms or toxins deliberately deployed to harm humans, animals or plants. The statutory framework strictly regulates dangerous pathogens, including pathogenic bacteria, viruses and naturally occurring toxins. Our own history and contemporary public health landscape underscore the devastating potential of these agents.

Anthrax, for instance, is a deadly bacterial agent that was weaponised during the liberation struggle to decimate the cattle population in rural communities. Decades later, Zimbabwe continues to battle sporadic anthrax outbreaks directly linked to that historical contamination. Another example is the infestation commonly known as *Matekenya*. This debilitating infestation caused severe physical suffering among our freedom fighters and remains a persistent public health concern in several districts. Lastly, highly consequential pathogens like smallpox and Ebola carry the potential for catastrophic loss of life, whilst deadly toxins such as ricin can be easily processed and weaponised to sabotage livestock and human population alike.

Madam Speaker, allow me now to highlight the core legislative pillars of this Bill. On Clause 4, it criminalises the development, production, manufacture, possession, stockpiling, acquisition, retention, importation, exportation, re-exportation, transportation, transit and transshipment, as well as the transfer or use of prohibited biological agents and toxins. The Clause prescribes stringent penalties, including mandatory imprisonment of not less than 10 years and substantial fines for individuals and corporate entities. Clause 5

designates the Secretary responsible for Defence as the responsible authority for the administration of the Act. The Secretary will be assisted by the expanded National Advisory Committee established under the Chemical Weapons Framework, ensuring scientific, technical and strategic continuity.

Clause 6 establishes a transparent licensing framework for biological agents and toxins intended strictly for curative, protective, diagnostic research or other peaceful purposes. The guarantee is that our medical professionals, agricultural scientists and academic researchers are protected and regulated rather than criminalised.

Clause 18 provides for the extraterritorial application of the Act, enabling Zimbabwean courts to exercise jurisdiction over specified offences committed outside Zimbabwe, where at the time of the alleged offence the person was a citizen or domiciled in Zimbabwe or was otherwise amenable to the jurisdiction of Zimbabwe.

Clause 26 introduces consequential amendments to the Chemical Weapons Prohibition Act, [*Chapter 11.18*]. These amendments will broaden the mandate of the National Advisory Committee to include oversight of biological agents and toxins. The

Committee's composition will be expanded to include expertise from relevant ministries and specialised institutions in the fields of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Health, Environment, Higher and Tertiary Education, Biosecurity and Industrial Sciences.

Madam Speaker, the enactment of this Bill will anchor four critical national benefits: Firstly, global cooperation. It unlocks full compliance with Article X of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), enabling Zimbabwe to seamlessly access global scientific knowledge, technology, technical assistance and equipment for peaceful epidemiological and emergency responses.

Secondly, enhanced defence capacity. The Bill will strengthen national security by criminalising activities associated with biological weapons, including their development, possession, financing and use. It will significantly enhance Zimbabwe's capacity to detect, prevent and respond to biological and toxin-related threats.

Thirdly, emergency preparedness. The Bill strengthens national biosafety and biosecurity standards, directly improving our emergency preparedness for laboratory incidents. Environmental contamination and natural disease outbreaks.

Lastly, the Bill establishes a transparent, regulated environment that safeguards responsible scientific research, ensuring that advanced biotechnology is utilised exclusively for peaceful, therapeutic and economic progress. Madam Speaker, the benefits arising from this legislation are substantial. Above all, the Bill safeguards human life, protects our livestock and agricultural economy, preserves environmental integrity and shields our national security.

Furthermore, it means Zimbabwe's standing as a responsible, rule-of-law-abiding member of the international community. In light of the foregoing, I commend the Biological and Toxin Weapons Crimes Bill, [H. B. 9, 2025], to this august House and the respectively urge Hon. Members to support its passage. Madam Speaker, I therefore move that the Bill be read the second time.

HON. MAWONEKE:

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Crimes Bill [H. B. 9, 2025], gazetted on 12th December 2025, seeks to prohibit the development, production, possession, transfer, and use of biological agents, toxins and weapons for hostile purposes while permitting their use for

prophylactic, protective and peaceful purposes under a licencing regime administered by the Secretary for Defence. It also seeks to domesticate the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on their Destruction (1972) and the Geneva Protocol of 1925 in line with Section 327 (2) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe.

The joint Portfolio Committees on Defence, Home Affairs, Security Services and War Veterans Affairs; Youth Empowerment Development and Vocational Training and the Thematic on Peace and Security conducted nationwide consultations to gather public views on the Bill. This report details the Committee's analysis of submissions received during public hearings and provides observations and recommendations to ensure the Bill is inclusive.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

On 19 February 2026, the Joint- Portfolio Committees on Defence, Home Affairs, Security Services and War Veterans Affairs; Youth Empowerment Development and Vocational Training and Peace and Security convened a half-day workshop aimed at capacitating Members of Parliament with a comprehensive

understanding of the provisions contained in the Biological and Toxin Weapons Crimes Bill [H. B. 9, 2025]. The workshop was attended by key stakeholders, including officials from the Ministry of Defence.

In compliance with Section 141 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, the joint Committees conducted public hearings across the country's 10 provinces to facilitate public participation in the legislative process. The Joint Committees deployed two teams to conduct public hearings from 9th to 13th March 2026 covering all ten provinces. Team A covered Gweru, Bulawayo, Tsholotsho, Plumtree and Kadoma whilst Team B covered Harare, Marondera, Masvingo, Mutare and Bindura.

The Committee also reviewed written submissions from various stakeholders, including members of the public, legal experts, civil society organisations (CSOs) and representatives from relevant government ministries. The consultation process ensured that the views of citizens from diverse geographical and social backgrounds were captured and considered.

3.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

3.1 General Submissions

Participants expressed their support of the Bill's objectives, recognising the importance of prohibiting biological weapons and fulfilling Zimbabwe's commitment in upholding international obligations or conventions.

3.2 Key Submissions on Specific Clauses

Clause 4: Offences in relation to biological agents, toxin or weapons

Participants across all provinces welcomed the provisions of this clause. They emphasised that the prohibition of biological agents, toxins, or weapons was justified on the grounds that their use posed a real threat to humanity. They also indicated that such weapons could spread uncontrollably, inflict mass casualties and destabilise societies far beyond the intended targets. Unlike conventional arms, biological agents had the potential to cause long-term environmental damage and undermine global health security. Some participants indicated that this prohibition was not only a matter of law but also of ethical duty, as it safeguarded humanity from catastrophic risks and promoted trust and cooperation among states. They strongly recommended that a life

sentence be given to anyone found in possession of biological agents, toxins, or weapons without an option of a fine.

Apart from being harmful and dangerous, participants acknowledged that biological agents and toxin-related materials under controlled circumstances serve beneficial purposes for a nation, particularly in advancing research and development. They argued that institutions such as universities, mining companies and agricultural organisations often relied on these agents for scientific innovation, disease control and industrial applications. It was therefore proposed that such institutions should be exempted from blanket prohibitions and instead be granted licences to operate legally and responsibly. Other participants proposed that the responsible authority should provide a comprehensive list of all biological agents, noting that offences related to their possession ought to be classified according to the toxicity and potential risk of each agent. They explained that this approach would strike a balance between safeguarding national security and enabling legitimate research, ensuring that scientific progress was not hindered while still maintaining strict oversight to prevent misuse.

3.3 Clause 5: Responsible Authority

Stakeholders supported the designation of the Secretary of Defence as the responsible authority under this Bill because of the unique role the office holds in safeguarding national security.

Majority of members of the security sector submitted that the Secretary of Defence possessed the necessary expertise, infrastructure and command structures to respond swiftly and effectively, to threats involving biological agents or toxins. It was highlighted that such crimes required coordination across military intelligence and scientific domains and the Secretary of Defence was best positioned to integrate these efforts under a unified strategy. They further argued that entrusting this responsibility to the Secretary of Defence ensured accountability at the highest level of Government while also reinforcing the seriousness with which the State regarded violations of the prohibition on biological and toxin weapons. They supported this provision and argued that it would help to ensure clarity of authority, streamline decision-making and strengthen the nation's capacity to prevent, investigate and prosecute such grave offences.

3.4 Clause 5 (2): National Authority Advisory Committee

Participants called for the inclusion of specialists from Ministries of Mines and Mining Development, Higher and Tertiary Education, Lands, Agriculture, Water, Fisheries and Rural Development so as to provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the complex challenges posed by biological and toxin weapons. It was emphasised that such diversity of membership allowed for informed decision-making, strengthened oversight and enhanced coordination across different government agencies and professional fields. Such composition guaranteed that policies and enforcement strategies would be guided not only by security considerations but also by public health, ethical and legal perspectives. It was further stated that the Committee's structure reinforced transparency, promoted trust among stakeholders and ensured that the nation's response to biological and toxin weapons crimes was both effective and credible.

Some representatives of women's groups called for the Bill to explicitly recognise gender dimensions and ensure that women are represented in advisory structures and implementation processes.

3.5 Clause 7: Conditions of obtaining a licence.

Participants called for strict conditions for obtaining a licence for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Crimes Bill; they noted that such licences should be granted subject to strong and uncompromising conditions to ensure that only credible and responsible institutions are granted permission to operate. Officials explained that applicants should demonstrate strict compliance with safety protocols, transparent monitoring systems, and the capacity to prevent misuse of biological agents. It was pointed out that licences should only be issued after thorough vetting, including background checks, facility inspections and proof of adherence to international standards such as those outlined in the Biological Weapons Convention. They also pointed out that strong licencing requirements would then strike a balance between enabling legitimate scientific progress and preventing the risk of biological agents being diverted for harmful purposes.

They proposed the establishment of decentralised information systems to ensure that licencing information, regulatory requirements, and public awareness materials are accessible at provincial and district levels. They argued that centralised systems create barriers for

researchers, small-scale enterprises and members of the public in remote areas.

3.6 Clause 15: Powers of inspectors in relation to search warrants

Participants expressed mixed views regarding the issue of search warrants. While some emphasised the need for judicial oversight to protect individual rights, others argued that inspections should be allowed to proceed without prior judicial authorisation. Those against the requirements for warrants highlighted the importance of efficiency and timeliness, noting that delays caused by seeking court approval could undermine enforcement efforts, allow evidence to be concealed or destroyed and weaken regulatory compliance. They contended that in certain contexts such as health, safety or environmental inspections, the ability to act swiftly is critical to safeguarding the public interest. From their perspective, inspections without search warrants were viewed as a practical mechanism to ensure accountability and prevent obstruction of justice and not as a violation of rights.

3.7 Clause 18: Extra-Territorial Application

Participants highlighted that biological agents and toxin weapons pose a grave threat to global peace and security, and their misuse often transcends national borders. They argued that extending jurisdiction beyond national borders, it ensures that offenders do not evade accountability simply by committing crimes in one jurisdiction and seeking refuge in another country. This approach closes jurisdictional loopholes, reinforces international obligations under treaties prohibiting biological weapons and demonstrates Zimbabwe's commitment to protecting humanity from acts that could endanger public health, safety and the environment. In this way, the provision strengthens deterrence, upholds the rule of law, and affirms that crimes involving biological and toxin weapons will be met with prosecution regardless of where they are perpetrated.

3.8 Other issues which were raised but not explicitly in the Bill.

3.8.1 Disposal of Biological Agents and Toxin Weapons

Concern was raised by members of the public related to the omission of clear provisions on the disposal of biological and toxin weapons in the Biological and Toxin Weapons Crimes Bill.

Participants questioned how confiscated materials would be destroyed, including weapons seized from offenders and those voluntarily surrendered under licencing requirements. They stressed that without explicit guidelines, there is a risk of accidental release, environmental contamination or diversion of dangerous substances to unauthorised persons.

A proposal was made for the Bill to provide for safe, secure and environmentally sound disposal procedures, integrated into both enforcement mechanisms and the licencing framework. In particular, the licencing process should require detailed protocols for the destruction or neutralisation of waste materials, ensuring that public health and safety are not compromised and that Zimbabwe meets international standards for responsible handling of biological agents.

3.8.2 Protection of whistle-blowers

Members of the public expressed significant concern that the Bill does not provide for the protection of whistleblowers who report offences related to biological and toxin weapons. Submissions emphasised that effective enforcement depends heavily on insiders coming forward with critical information, yet without robust

protection mechanisms, potential whistleblowers may remain silent out of fear of retaliation, harassment or loss of employment.

Participants proposed an inclusion of explicit provisions safeguarding whistleblowers to encourage reporting and strengthen accountability.

They further proposed the need for incorporating incentives such as legal immunity, financial rewards or career protections to motivate individuals to disclose information that could prevent serious threats to public health and security.

3.8.3 Independent Appeals Mechanism

A significant concern raised by participants was the absence of an independent appellate body within the Bill. Members of the public argued that decisions made by the responsible authority, particularly in relation to licence applications, suspensions or cancellations, should not be final without the possibility of impartial review. They proposed for the establishment of an independent appeals tribunal to provide a transparent and credible mechanism for challenging such decisions. They highlighted that access to justice requires more than administrative discretion; it demands a fair and independent process that instils confidence in regulatory enforcement. Without such a

tribunal, there is a risk of perceived bias, limited accountability and erosion of trust in the licencing framework.

4.0 OBSERVATIONS

The Committee made the following observations;

4.1 There were no safeguards to protect whistleblowers to encourage reporting and accountability.

4.2 The Bill did not provide for an independent appeal tribunal for impartial review of the decisions made by the responsible authority to ensure transparency and credible mechanism for challenging such decisions.

4.3. The composition of the National Authority Advisory Committee does not reflect a diversity of membership and stakeholders critical for informed decision-making, strengthened oversight and enhanced coordination across different Government agencies and professional fields.

4.4 The aspect of gender was taken into consideration, particularly the need to incorporate women in key areas such as the National Advisory Authority Committee and appeals processes.

4.5. Certain circumstances would require inspectors to act without prior judicial authorisation since delays caused by seeking court approval could undermine enforcement efforts, allow evidence to be concealed or destroyed and weaken regulatory compliance.

4.6 The Bill does not provide for a provision that stipulates procedures for safe, secure and environmentally sound disposal procedures of confiscated materials,

4.7. The Bill also does not provide for a decentralised information system which participants identified as essential for accessibility, particularly for researchers and enterprises outside major urban centres.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends the following that;

5.1 Whistleblower Protection

The Bill should include explicit provisions for safeguarding whistleblowers who report biological and toxin weapons-related offences. This should include legal immunity from retaliation, confidentiality guarantees and structured incentives such as financial

rewards or career protections to encourage reporting and enhance accountability.

5.2 Independent Appeals Tribunal

The Bill should provide for the establishment an independent appeals tribunal mandated to hear challenges against licencing decisions, suspensions or cancellations made by the responsible authority. The tribunal should operate transparently with clear procedures and impartial membership, to ensure fairness and credibility in the appeals process.

5.3 Clause 5(2): Diversity in National Advisory Committee

Composition

The composition of the National Authority Advisory Committee should be revised to include a broader range of stakeholders, such as representatives from health, environment, academia, civil society and law enforcement. This diversity will strengthen oversight, improve decision-making and enhance coordination across Government agencies and professional fields.

5.4 Gender Representation

The Bill should incorporate gender-responsive provisions to ensure equitable representation of women in key structures, including the National Advisory Authority Committee and appeals processes. This will address existing gender gaps, promote inclusivity and align the Bill with constitutional and international commitments to gender equality.

5.6 Clause 15: Powers of Inspections

Inspectors should be allowed to act without prior judicial authorisation in certain circumstances where delays could compromise enforcement while also embedding safeguards to prevent abuse of power. This dual approach ensures both efficiency and protection of rights.

5.6 Insertion of a new clause on disposal of confiscated materials

The Bill should, in clear terms, provide for the disposal of confiscated materials to be inserted in the Bill and it should include clear procedures for the safe, secure and environmentally sound disposal of confiscated biological and toxin materials. These

procedures should align with international best practices to prevent accidental release, environmental harm or diversion to unauthorised.

5.7 All biological weapons or agents should be kept within registered, regulated or controlled premises in order to prevent misuse or abuse by individuals.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The Biological and Toxin Weapons Crimes Bill represents an important step in fulfilling Zimbabwe's international obligations and strengthening national security against the threat of biological weapons. The nationwide public hearings demonstrate broad support for the Bill's objectives and recognition of the importance of regulating biological agents and toxins. However, the Bill must be refined to address gaps identified by members of the public, including clarity on search warrants, protection of whistleblowers, gender inclusivity, appropriate composition of regulatory structures, safe disposal of biological materials and decentralisation of information systems.

The recommendations in this report seek to ensure that the final legislation not only implements international conventions effectively

but does so in a manner that respects constitutional rights, protects vulnerable populations, engages relevant sectors and provides for transparent and accessible administrative processes. The Committee urges Parliament to adopt these recommendations to create a robust, inclusive and constitutionally sound legal framework that protects Zimbabwe from biological weapons threats while promoting peaceful scientific research and development. Thank you Madam speaker.

HON. MADZIVANYIKA: Thank you Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, let me give my voice on this very important Bill, the Biological Weapons and Toxins Bill.

What this Bill seeks to do, Madam Speaker, is to criminalise the use of biological weapons without authority or without a licence.

Generally Madam Speaker, what is a biological weapon? I think that is the fundamental starting point for Hon. Members to understand.

What is a biological weapon? Biology is the study of living organisms. So, whenever we are talking about a biological weapon, we are now saying it is the use of living organisms for harmful purposes because it now becomes a weapon. So, these living organisms can be used to harm humans, animals and other living

plants. So, that system where biological weapons harm individuals, animals and plants is what this Bill seeks to curtail. The Bill aims to mitigate the dangers of biological weapons and toxins.

Let me give examples of biological weapons and toxins for the benefit of the House, Madam Speaker. There are what we call bacteria.

HON. MADZIVANYIKA (SPEAKING)bacteria, generally there are many forms of bacteria Madam Speaker Ma'am. The examples are anthrax, plague and anthrax causes severe infection of the lungs. Then also the plague causes severe effects of pneumonia. There are also what you call glanders, which affect horses and humans. So, not only bacteria but there are also viruses and someone can use viruses as weapons against other people, animals or crops. Examples of such, Madam Speaker Ma'am, are smallpox, Ebola, Influenza and Nipah virus. If you look at Ebola in Central Africa, we all know the devastating effects of that virus and how it has spread and disrupted even the economy of countries in Central and Sub-Saharan Africa. As such, Government needs to ensure that we put

mechanisms to detect and also to try to mitigate the incidence of the use of these weapons.

Madam Speaker Ma'am, there is also what you call the fungi toxins which attack crops. I am a farmer and nearby, I realise that there is a farmer who is doing well, or this other country is doing well in this crop. We can actually weaponise the use of fungi to disrupt cropping or harvesting in that particular area. In that regard, there is need for Government to in place put legislation to try and ensure that we safeguard our nation against such acts of bigotry.

Madam Chair, there are also toxins. Let me give you examples. There is what we call botulinum. That toxin causes quick paralysis in both humans and animals. So, if you look at a whole range of these viruses, bacteria, fungi and toxins, if they are not regulated, they can cause a serious catastrophe on the economy of a country. They can cause a serious disruption in the manner in which humans live in our population and our health. It will affect the demography and all other spheres of our economy and life in general.

Madam Speaker Ma'am, this Bill then comes to say, if you want to produce biological weapons, have biological agents, process them,

transport them, warehouse them, develop them, transit them, export them, import them and re-export them, then you need to have what is called a licence. You can get that licence from the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Defence.

Generally, Madam Speaker, this is the gist of the Bill. What we are saying is that the Bill is not bad in principle. The Bill is good in principle because it is intended to protect the citizens of this country. It is intended to protect the animals, flora and fauna of this country from these harmful toxins that can be weaponised against our people. It is not an isolated case, Madam Speaker. There are conventions that have been held in the International Forum to say we should ban these biological toxins. Actually, we are behind in terms of ratifying and domesticating these treaties. This is a fundamental way of domesticating a treaty that we have ratified.

So, as such, we were late Madam Speaker. This is a Bill that is important for all people because it is actually intended to protect the security of Zimbabweans. I am only worried about one thing. This Bill does not have a schedule of these bacteria. I may be holding a bacteria, or I may be developing a bacteria, unknowingly that this is a

bacteria which is censored by this Bill. I suggest the Hon. Minister should go back and try to insert a schedule at the back to say, we are having this schedule and this is the list of bacteria that need licencing. We are not a prophet. Some of us, we do not know. You may be an individual who is just walking, carrying some of these things without knowledge. As such, you may be penalised unknowingly. To remove ambiguity at all levels across the populace of Zimbabwe, I recommend that the Hon. Minister goes and try to insert that schedule outlining the list of bacterial toxins, the list of viral weapons, the list of fungi weapons, the list of all toxins that are actually prohibited under this so that we remove that vagueness that may affect other people. By and large, Madam Speaker, I fully support the Bill. I do not have any reservations against it. I thank you.

HON. MASHAVAVE: Thank you Madam Speaker Ma'am. I stand before you to support the Joint Committee findings on the Biological and Toxic Weapons Bill [H.B. 9, 2025.], Biological Weapons Convention, BWC prohibits the development, production, stockpiling of biological and toxic weapons and their destruction. It is a United Nations Convention Treaty, which was signed in 1972 and

ratified in 1975. Madam Speaker Ma'am, the Convention prohibits State parties from developing, producing, stockpiling or otherwise acquiring microbial or other biological agents or toxin weapons and in quantities that have no justification of protective or other peaceful purposes. Weapons, equipment or delivery vehicles designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflicts, transferring or assisting, encouraging or inducing anyone, State or non-state actor, to manufacture or acquire the above.

Zimbabwe became part of this Convention on the 5th November 1990, Madam Speaker Ma'am. To date, we have got many questions unanswered on the COVID-19 pandemic, whether it was a natural disease or a chemical weapon between countries. Recently, we lost a substantive quantity of fish in Lake Chivero on suspicion that it was a bacterial contamination which would have serious harm on human beings.

I, therefore, support the Bill and support the findings of the Committee that we prohibit the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling of biological or toxin weapons, to ban, transfer, transmit, trans-shipment of biological agents with weapon intent; prohibit,

assist financially, harbouring any person or entity engaging in prohibited activities.

It is of paramount importance because the Bill has indicated that the Secretary for Defence will be the custodian. The Committee, in support said it is of paramount importance that the Secretary for Defence should be the custodian of this Bill and the responsible authority to preside over it. So I submit Madam Speaker Ma'am.

HON. CHIDUWA: Thank you Madam Speaker Ma'am for allowing me to add my voice to this critical debate on biological and toxic weapons. The Bill seeks to prohibit the development, production, manufacture, possession and stockpiling, even acquisition, importation, exportation and the use of biological toxins and biological weapons. Zimbabwe, as a country, has obligations under very critical conventions. The first one being the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and the 1925 Geneva Protocol. These are very critical conventions to which Zimbabwe has acceded and we are a member to. As a country, we would want to align our domestic law with constitutional requirements under Section 327 (2) of the Constitution. I would want to support the Bill. This is not

merely a legislative exercise. On my part, it is a solemn declaration by myself, by the country, that we stand firmly on the side of humanity. We stand on the side of peace and as a country, we stand on the side of global security.

Let me start by looking at the preamble and Clause 3. The preamble and Clause 3, invoke Section 327 (2) of the Constitution, which requires that international treaties be incorporated into domestic law through an Act of Parliament before binding Zimbabwe.

I am sure this is what the Hon. Minister has done to bring this to the august House so that whatever is contained in these conventions is aligned with our domestic laws. If it is aligned with our domestic laws, then it becomes enforceable under our laws in Zimbabwe.

Madam Speaker, Zimbabwe ratified the Biological Weapons Convention. However, ratification alone, without domestic legislation, leaves our obligations hollow. I have already mentioned that Section 327 (2) of our Constitution is unambiguous. International treaties must be incorporated through an Act of Parliament and this Bill fulfills that constitutional imperative. We cannot be a responsible member of the international community while our domestic law lags

behind our international commitments. I would want to thank the Hon. Minister and also to say that the Bill closes that gap decisively.

The other issue that I would want to look at is that biological weapons are weapons of mass destruction. They do not discriminate between combatants, civilians, the elderly, children, the healthy and the sick. History has shown us, from the anthrax attacks to the deliberate weaponisation of plagues, that biological weapons represent one of the gravest threats to human civilisation. The mandatory minimum sentences prescribed in Clause 4 send an ambiguous message. Zimbabwe has zero tolerance for biological terrorism and weapons proliferation. The Bill is carefully balanced. It does not criminalise legitimate scientific research, medical work, or pharmaceutical production. Clause 4 (2) provides a clear defence for those who can demonstrate that their possession was strictly for protective or other peaceful purposes. This is the balance between security and scientific progress that responsible legislation demands.

Hon. Speaker, the Bill is not stifling Zimbabwe's scientific, medical or agricultural sectors. Quite contrary, the licencing regime established under Part 3 of this Bill creates a clear, transparent and

accessible pathway for legitimate users of biological agents; our pharmaceutical companies, research institutions and our medical practitioners to continue their vital work within a regulated framework. Clause 11 is particularly commendable. It recognises that many of our pharmaceutical manufacturers are already licenced under the Medicines and Allied Substances Control Act. Rather than burdening them with the duplicative bureaucracy, this Bill deems them automatically licenced under this Act, subject to a simple notification process. This is smart and efficient regulation.

Let me transition to the responsible authority, which is under Clause 5. The designation of the Secretary of Defence as the responsible authority is a deliberate and wise choice. Biological weapons are first and foremost a national security threat. Placing oversight within the Ministry of Defence ensures that the administrative work of this Act is informed by security imperatives, while being supported by the multisectoral expertise of the National Authority Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee draws expertise also from Foreign Affairs, Health, Environment, Industry, Police, Customs and the Medicines Control Authority of Zimbabwe

and the Science and Industrial Research Council. This whole-of-Government approach is exactly what effective implementation of international security obligations demands.

Let me also comment Madam Speaker, on enforcement provisions as provided for under Clauses 14 to 18. A law without enforcement is merely aspirational. Part 4 of the Bill gives teeth to our prohibitions. The powers granted to inspectors are robust but constitutionally compliant. Entry without a warrant, is only permitted in circumstances already recognised under the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act where consent is given or where the agency of the situation demands immediate action. The extraterritorial provisions as provided for under Clause 18 are particularly significant. Biological weapons threats do not respect national borders. A Zimbabwean citizen who develops a biological weapon abroad poses just as grave a threat to our people as one who does so domestically. This Bill ensures that our courts can reach out to such offenders. Clause 17, Security Directions, empowers inspectors to act proactively and not just reactively. Prevention is always better than prosecution when the potential harm involves mass casualties.

Let me also comment on information, confidentiality and evidence as provided for in Clauses 19 to 21. Effective regulation requires information. Clause 19 ensures that, the responsible authority has access to the data necessary to monitor compliance but this may be balanced with the protection of legitimate commercial and scientific confidentiality. Clause 20 strikes that balance. Information shared with authorities is protected except where disclosure is required for enforcement, public safety or by court order. Clause 21 addresses a critical practical challenge in prosecuting biological weapons offences, the technical complexity of the evidence by making analyst certificates *prima facie* admissible; the Bill enables efficient prosecution without compromising the rights of the accused, who retain the right to challenge the analyst's findings.

On appeals and regulations, the Bill is not a bland instrument. Clause 22 ensures that any person aggrieved by a licencing decision, whether a refusal, a cancellation or an amendment, has a clear right of appeal. The 30-day determination period is extended to 60 days with further submissions, ensuring timely resolutions. Whether the

Minister fails to act, the Administrative Justice Act provides recourse to the High Court and this is the rule of law in practice.

As I conclude, the Biological and Toxic Weapon Crimes Bill, [HB 9] is a landmark piece of legislation. It is a Bill that protects our people from one of the most terrifying categories of weapons known to humanity. It is a Bill that fulfils our constitutional obligations and our international commitments. It is a Bill that supports a legitimate science, medicine and industry while drawing a firm and unambiguous line against those who would weaponise biology for hostile purposes. I urge Hon. Members to support this Bill without reservations. I so submit.

HON. KAITANO: Thank you very much Madam Speaker. Firstly, allow me to appreciate the work that has been done by the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe, through the Ministry of Defence, to bring this Bill to Parliament and to the people of Zimbabwe to include their inputs. For me, it shows responsibility on the part of our Government to ensure and enhance security in the country. Modern-day security is not just the physical infrastructure of weaponry and armory. Neither is it just confined to the personnel that

are used to ensure security of a country but technological and biological weapons are becoming prevalent and it is critical that every nation takes care of the security of its citizens, its people, its environment, as well as its borders.

Madam Speaker Ma'am, I had an opportunity to attend public consultations with the people of Zimbabwe. I did not come across anybody who objected to the Toxins and Biological Weapons Bill. Neither did I come across anybody who was against the ratification of the Biological Weapons Convention. Madam Speaker Ma'am, biological weapons, if not regulated, players within the scientific industry, if not kept in check, if not governed, they are not able to self-regulate themselves. There is a high chance of misuse of any biological activities to the detriment of national security.

I, therefore, greatly support the need to licence, the need to regulate any activities that have to do with biological weapons and toxins. Indeed, as a country, Madam Speaker Ma'am, we cannot let this happen on its own without regulation. If left unchecked, biological weapons can be harmful to public health.

Up to now, Madam Speaker Ma'am, the world is still battling with some theory that says COVID-19 was a result of laboratory activity. During that time, Madam Speaker, the world was in shock, the world was in fear and unfortunately people died *en masse*. This supports the need for Zimbabwe to ratify all international conventions that have to do with biological weapons and toxins.

This will threaten our national security; this will threaten our food security and our agricultural activities. The country of Zimbabwe is doing all it can in order to be self-sustainable in terms of our food. The Government of the Republic is putting many efforts to invest into agriculture, into climate-proofing agricultural activities.

Therefore, leaving the biological and toxin activities unchecked would be irresponsible on the part of the Government but to cement the activities that the Government is doing in terms of ensuring food security, the Biological and Toxins Weapons Bill will help to strengthen, will help to give a positive effect in ensuring that the country has got food security. Madam Speaker Ma'am, even our environment needs protection.

Biological weapons do not choose. They kill and maim both human beings and animals, as well as plants. They destroy the lives of Zimbabwean citizens. So, I stand up today supporting this Bill, echoing the sentiments of the people of Zimbabwe that indeed, this Bill has to be enacted. Parliament is urging us to facilitate the passage of this Bill in order to protect our country from biological harm into our public health, into our environment, into our agriculture and indeed, the security architecture. Therefore, Madam Speaker Ma'am, I support the passage of this Bill, I thank you.

***HON. MAPIKI:** Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise to support this important Bill that was long overdue. During the Liberation War two types of wars were being fought and these were biological warfare and passive warfare. In passive warfare, there were no devices used, such as bombs and in biological warfare, there was the use of bombs such as gas grenades. These grenades, when detonated, would release a poisonous gas that would affect blood cells called haemoglobin, responsible for carrying oxygen to the different parts of the body. This would result in your body not having enough oxygen.

There were also napalm bombs, which were widely used during the war. These would cause a victim's skin to peel off. These would be dropped from the air using jets and these were used by the Smith army to fight the black freedom fighters. Sometimes they would put poison on clothes.

Madam Speaker, there should be detectors to detect such poisons, especially now with the way our fellow countrymen are being chased out of South Africa. During the liberation struggle, most clothes, such as jeans, would come from countries such as South Africa and they would be smuggled in through Gonarezhou National Park. These clothes were mostly worn by the freedom fighters and if they were unfortunate enough to wear clothes with such poison, the poison would react with a person's sweat and their skin would peel off. If these contaminated clothes were washed in the river, the poison would affect the fish.

During the Iran and Iraq war of 1981, biological warfare was also used, where bombs with poisonous gas would be dropped from the sky and some were on the ground. This resulted in the death of many people. If we also look back at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, people

were affected to the extent that for many years after the war had ended, generations of children were born with disabilities as a result of such poisons.

In this country, Madam Speaker, we have passive biological warfare that is being brought about by miners through the use of mercury. If mercury is burned, it releases a gas that, if inhaled, affects brain function, the nervous system and breathing in people but we use it in extracting gold. If we also look at cyanide, there is research that is being carried out where they carry out heap leaching. This is where they pour cyanide on rocks and they dissolve, leaving gold. This is affecting the ecosystem through radiation exposure and also the depletion of the ozone layer. Therefore, this Bill should examine the use of such poisonous substances in gold production. During the panning of gold, mercury contaminates the stream and river water and gets into fish, which we consume. This causes illnesses. This Bill should look into such issues.

The Bill should also address issues of smuggling. Zambia imports biological material for warfare from South Africa and it passes through Zimbabwe. We should have legislation that prohibits

such material from passing through this country. In my research on drugs, I found out that certain individuals from other countries are bringing in drugs so that they can sell them and get United States dollars. We should have laws in place that prohibit the trafficking or transportation of drugs through our borders so that they transit through other countries.

During the liberation struggle, we would use guerrilla warfare and conventional warfare but now we have digital warfare. So, as Zimbabwe, we should have laws that look into the use of drones and digital warfare. In conclusion, I would like to say I am in support of this Bill as it was long overdue. I thank you.

HON. PINDUKA: Thank you Madam Speaker for allowing me to add my voice to this very important debate that is before us on the Biological Weapons and Toxins Bill. Madam Speaker, I rise to support this Bill as a member of the Defence, Home Affairs, Security Services and Veterans of the Liberation Struggle Committee that also participated in the public hearings that were held from 9th to 13th March, 2026.

The submissions from the public were very clear that the people of Zimbabwe wish that this Bill be domesticated so that at the end of the day, there is public safety, as this Bill seeks to criminalise offences related to the production and stockpiling, among others, of biological weapons and toxins as well as agents. This Bill is about the prevention of the misuse of dangerous biological materials.

Based on the UN Biological Weapons Convention of 1972, Zimbabwe also deposited its instruments with respect to the UN Biological Weapons Convention in November 1990. However, I would like to applaud His Excellency the President, Dr. Emmerson Mnangagwa and the Hon. Minister of Defence for bringing in this very important Bill to domesticate the biological weapons, toxins and agents. In that respect, a lot has been said by other Hon. Members before me; however, I would like to point to three reasons why I am supporting this Bill.

Firstly, national security and public safety. This will come into play in the form of the prevention of bioterrorism in the form of the development, production and stockpiling and use of these biological weapons in the interest of national security and public safety. This

Bill also deters the misuse, that is to say, it criminalises penalties and discourages individuals, companies and laboratories from handling pathogens for the wrong reasons.

Another reason Madam Speaker is with compliance with international law, as I have highlighted, the UN Biological Weapons Convention of 1972 and as Zimbabwe, we are a signatory to such. It also supports the global cooperation of countries. Zimbabwe will also work, for example, through INTERPOL. The domestication of this Bill will also assist Zimbabwe in its global cooperation with other states once domesticated.

Then, point number three, Madam Speaker, also looks at public health protection where we are looking at controlling high-risk agents like the other examples that have been brought forward by the Hon. Minister, including anthrax. There will also be faster responses to outbreaks once this Bill is in place as well as improved coordination and integration. In the event of an accidental release, there are also structured mitigation measures and response mechanisms. So, Madam Speaker, this Bill will also assist in that regard.

I would also like to speak to Clause 5, which vests responsibility in the Secretary for Defence to support integration through a whole-of-government approach by assisting other line ministries in responding and ensuring that this Bill is effectively implemented.

On the Advisory Committee, I would also like to suggest, Madam Speaker, that universities and research institutions be included so that they can provide timely innovations. New inventions and technologies can also be incorporated through universities and research institutions with respect to the composition of the Advisory Committee.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, in my recommendations, I would also like to suggest that as we approach the National Budget formulation, I call upon the Members of this august House to support the Ministry of Defence with adequate resources for the procurement of appropriate technologies and artificial intelligence systems to detect and analyse biological and toxin weapons. This support should also extend to strengthening border control systems, to combat trafficking as well as capacitating the men and women professionals working in the area of biological weapons, toxins and bacteriological agents so that at the

end of the day, they remain relevant and are well equipped to protect public health. With these few remarks, Madam Speaker, I so submit. I thank you.

***HON. DHANZI:** Thank you Madam Speaker, for allowing me to add my voice. First and foremost, I would like to thank His Excellency, President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa who cares about this country and has made it possible for this Bill to be brought before this august House through the Hon. Minister of Defence, a heroine. I fully support the Bill because it seeks to safeguard the health of the people. Weapons are dangerous as has already been highlighted by the previous speaker, Hon. Mapiki, when he reiterated to the Hon. Minister of Defence that chemicals such as cyanide have claimed the lives of many people in the communal areas. Therefore, the enactment of this Bill will ensure that the health of the people is well protected. It will also strengthen peace within our country as Zimbabweans. Everyone in Zimbabwe will live with the assurance that they are fully protected. This has also contributed to Zimbabwe attaining a position in the peacekeeping efforts of the United Nations Security Council. It was considered necessary for our country to be

part of those efforts. We are also looking at best practices from other countries where similar measures are already being implemented, making it important for us to do the same.

In conclusion, I fully support the Bill because it will strengthen the maintenance of peace, the protection of animals, flora and fauna, as well as the protection of the country. I fully support the Bill before us. I thank you.

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (HON. MUCHINGURI-KASHIRI): I move that the debate do now adjourn.

Motion put and agreed to.

Debate to resume: Tuesday, 14th July, 2026.

On the motion of **THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (HON. MUCHINGURI-KASHIRI)**, *the House adjourned at Seven Minutes to Four o'clock p.m. until Tuesday, 14th July, 2026.*