

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Zambia Summary 26 November 2025

Various civil society and faith-based organisations announce plans for mass protests against the government's proposed Constitution Amendment Bill No. 7 (Bill 7) on 28 November. United States-headquartered S&P Global Ratings removes Zambia's selective default designation and upgrades the country's long- and short-term foreign currency sovereign ratings to CCC+/C with a stable outlook. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) revises Zambia's 2025 economic growth projection downward to 5.2% from 5.8%, citing the country's ongoing energy crisis as a major constraint on production and overall economic performance. Zambia and Tanzania sign a \$1.4 billion agreement with China to modernise the TAZARA railway, linking landlocked Zambia to the Indian Ocean.

Protests planned against Constitutional amendments

Various civil society and faith-based organisations have announced plans to organise mass protests on 28 November against the government's proposed **Constitution Amendment Bill No. 7 (Bill 7)**. Despite repeated calls for dialogue and wider consultations, the government insists it will press ahead with the amendment process, marking deepening mistrust over constitutional reform ahead of the 2026 general elections.

Bill 7 proposes significant [changes](#) to Zambia's political system, with the legislation aiming to expand the **National Assembly** from 156 to 211 elected seats to reflect updated constituency boundaries. It also seeks to introduce a mixed-member proportional representation system, reserving seats for women, youth, and persons with disabilities, to be allocated from party lists.

On the local government front, the bill [would](#) remove the two-term limit for mayors and council chairpersons and align the terms of **Parliament** and local councils to a unified five-year period beginning after each election. It would also change nomination rules, restrict by-elections (no by-elections within 180 days of a general election), and redefine how vacancies are handled.

While proponents argue these changes will modernise governance and improve representation, the opposition and government critics [see](#) an ulterior motive by the government ahead of the 2026 general election. A coalition led by the **Oasis Forum**, which includes the **Council of Churches in Zambia**, the **Evangelical Fellowship**, the **Law Association of Zambia (LAZ)**, and other civil society groups, has mobilised strongly against Bill 7, arguing the amendment process has been rushed, non-inclusive, and election-centred, prioritising political advantage over democratic legitimacy.

On 28 November, the Oasis Forum [plans](#) a march from the **Freedom Statue** to the **State House** in **Lusaka**. The protest has the endorsement of Catholic Archbishop **Ignatius Chama**, who framed it as a "*sacred civic duty*," warning that the amendments risk "*quietly stripping away*" constitutional safeguards.

The government, while insisting on a dialogue-based process, has pushed back hard. Information minister **Cornelius Mweetwa** [urged](#) civil society and church leaders to engage rather than use street action, warning that protests could be manipulated to destabilise the country in a tense election season. Law enforcement has also raised the stakes with the **Zambia Police Service**, through spokesperson **Godfrey Chilabi**, warning that any public gathering

judged to threaten safety, block essential services, or fall into "unlawful" territory will face "firm, lawful action."

The timing of Bill 7 has raised suspicions among its critics as some see it as a strategic move to favour the ruling **United Party for National Development (UPND)** before the 2026 polls. Civil society groups warn that allowing political parties to fill vacated parliamentary seats would weaken electoral accountability, while removing by-elections close to election time could insulate incumbents. The LAZ has [asserted](#) that Bill 7 is already a legal nullity because it was introduced without the "wide public consultations" required under the constitution. The LAZ has argued the process should be postponed until after the election, warning that rushing such reforms could strain the national budget and undermine trust in democratic institutions.

Zambia exits debt default as S&P upgrades sovereign rating

United States (US)-headquartered **S&P Global Ratings** on 21 November removed Zambia's selective-default designation and upgraded the country's long- and short-term foreign-currency sovereign ratings to CCC+/C with a stable outlook. The move marks the end of a five-year chapter that began when the country missed international bond payments in 2020 and entered selective default.

S&P noted that its [decision](#) reflects concrete progress on Zambia's debt restructuring and signs of improving fiscal conditions, pointing out that the government's restructuring of commercial external liabilities with agreements reached covering the vast majority of debt. So far, Zambia has [reached](#) agreements with official and commercial creditors, representing some 94% of the total \$13.3 billion debt to be restructured.

In September, the government forecast a healthier economic outlook for 2026, estimating the budget would more than halve and economic growth rise above 6% following years of protracted [debt restructuring](#) negotiations and a [severe drought](#). S&P also [cited](#) macro drivers that underpin the upgrade, including a rebound in copper production and supportive copper price estimates.

While exiting default is primarily a restoration of credit continuity and market confidence rather than an immediate boom, finance minister **Situmbeko Musokotwane** [welcomed](#) the upgrade and said the country was steadily restoring its place as a credible and investable economy. S&P's upgrade from selective default to CCC+ [removes](#) the market's formal label that the country is not meeting its obligations; this matters for many institutional investors and funds that are restricted from holding sovereign bonds classified as in default. The upgrade could also make new borrowing marginally cheaper because investor [perceptions](#) of near-term payment risk decline.

Despite the upgrade, the CCC+ rating remains speculative grade and not an investment grade as the S&P flagged remaining vulnerabilities to Zambia including unfinished bilateral negotiations, a small share of external commercial debt still pending restructuring, elevated financing needs, and political risks linked to the 2026 national election. Zambia [still](#) faces high debt ratios and significant financing needs, with the country currently in talks with the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** about a one-year [extension](#) of its current \$1.3 billion programme that runs until January, seeking an additional \$145m.

... but IMF reduces 2025 growth prospects due to persistent power shortages

The IMF has revised Zambia's 2025 economic growth projection downward, citing the country's ongoing energy crisis as a major constraint on production and overall economic performance.

Zambia is facing a severe electricity shortage, with state-owned **ZESCO** reducing residential power supply to three hours daily due to constrained generation and limited regional imports, while urging public cooperation to prevent further disruptions.

Presenting the IMF's economic outlook for African countries in Lusaka on 20 November, IMF resident representative, **Eric Lautier**, [explained](#) that Zambia's growth was initially projected at 5.8%, but the persistent power shortages disrupting industries, businesses and agriculture has led to a lower forecast of 5.2%. He also highlighted that energy shortages remain one of the most pressing risks to Zambia's short-term recovery.

Zambia is [currently](#) experiencing an electricity deficit of over 750MW, a shortfall driven primarily by the reduced ability of its hydroelectric power plants to produce enough electricity due to insufficient water levels. The drop in generation capacity is further compounded by surging demand from key economic sectors such as mining, agriculture, and the broader pressures of a growing population and economy.

ZESCO has [cited](#) "*extreme challenges*" in electricity generation and distribution, attributing the crisis to transmission bottlenecks affecting cross-border power flow, regional power system disturbances, and critically low water levels at all major hydropower stations. Zambia has been grappling with a severe power deficit caused by the prolonged drought during the 2023/2024 rainy season, as about 80% of the country's electricity supply comes from hydropower sources.

Despite the downward revision, Zambia's projected growth still exceeds the 4.1% average expected for most African economies, underscoring the country's potential, once power shortages are resolved.

Chief government spokesperson **Cornelius Mweetwa** [said](#) load shedding is expected to ease by August 2026, with the country working on several new generation projects in solar, coal and hydro power.

Tazara deal signed as Chinese premier in historic Zambia visit

Zambia and **Tanzania**, on 20 November [signed](#) a \$1.4 billion agreement with **China** to modernise the **TAZARA** railway linking landlocked Zambia to the **Indian Ocean**. The 1,860 km long railway, a critical trade route that facilitates copper exports and fuel imports through Tanzania, was financed and built by China in the 1970s, but it has fallen into a state of disrepair and operates at a fraction of its design capacity.

The refurbished TAZARA line will compete directly with the US-backed west-bound **Lobito Corridor**, with the copper-producing region of the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** and Zambia becoming central to efforts by the US and **Europe** to secure access to minerals that electric vehicle manufacturers need as part of the energy transition.

The \$1.6 billion Lobito project will [link](#) mining operations owned by multinational companies to the **port of Lobito** in Angola by building a new track in Zambia and connecting it to an existing railway in Angola. The US is supporting the refurbishment of the Angolan line and has approved a \$250m loan for the whole project, while the **African Development Bank (AfDB)** plans to contribute approximately \$500m to the project through a blend of sovereign and non-sovereign instruments, including concessional allocations.

The TAZARA deal was signed during a visit by Chinese Premier **Li Qiang** (X), the first such visit by a Chinese premier in 28 years. China is Zambia's largest official creditor, owed \$5.7 billion, and is keen to highlight countries that are model members of President **Xi Jinping's** flagship **Belt and Road** infrastructure initiative.

Qiang's arrival in Lusaka is part of a push to deepen China's presence in the copper-rich country as Europe and the US vie to be alternative benefactors. During the meeting with Qiang,

President **Hakainde Hichilema** (2021-present) [expressed](#) gratitude for China's role in Zambia's debt restructuring process.

On 17 November, Zambia issued a licence to a joint venture with China's **Fujian Xiang Xin Corporation (FJXX)** to [build](#) a \$1.1 billion crude oil refinery and energy complex, underscoring China's growing economic footprint in the country. Chinese companies have invested about \$6 billion in Zambia over the last two decades, almost all in the metals sector.

Planner

13 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Bank of Zambia** (central bank) **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** meeting

Aug 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** General election

Chronology

24 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers**. Mines and minerals development minister **Paul Kabuswe** says the government will deploy soldiers on 1 December to curb illegal mining activities across the country;

23 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor**. Opposition **Patriotic Front (PF)** acting president, **Given Lubinda**, vows that a violent attack he reportedly suffered in **Kabwe** will not deter him from pursuing his political ambitions, insisting he remains committed to seeking the country's leadership;

23 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor**. Mines and minerals development minister, **Paul Kabuswe**, says mining companies operating in Zambia will have six months to develop and submit supplier development programmes to the ministry once the new local content regulations take effect next year;

21 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers**. The **Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ)** says it has recorded 1,028,503 new voter registrations across the country, comprising 478,295 males and 550,208 females, as of 11 November;

18 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Reuters**. **United States (US)** confirms the delivery of approximately 1,000 doses of **Gilead Sciences'** drug lenacapavir, the first delivery under a US scheme to supply the **HIV** prevention drug to countries with a high prevalence of HIV;

18 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers**. The **United States** government is expected to commit \$1.5 billion to support Zambia's health sector for the next five years, starting in April 2026;

18 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor**. Opposition **Patriotic Front (PF)** chairperson for information and publicity, **Emmanuel Mwamba**, writes to the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)**, raising concerns over President **Hakainde Hichilema's** actions that, he alleges, threaten Zambia's democracy;

17 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Lusaka Times**. President **Hakainde Hichilema** holds talks with **United States (US)** secretary of state **Marco Rubio** on strengthening cooperation;

14 Nov 2025 **Nakonde (Zambia) Zambia Monitor**. Zambia and **Zimbabwe** sign five agreements on economic cooperation, diplomatic training, and other areas following a meeting between President **Hakainde Hichilema** and Zimbabwean President **Emmerson Mnangagwa**;

12 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers**. **Bank of Zambia** (central bank) cut its main lending rate for the first time in five years by 25 basis points to 14.25 % in response to a continued decline in the annual inflation rate;

11 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. President **Hakainde Hichilema** and **Israeli** President **Isaac Herzog** hold bilateral talks in Lusaka to strengthen Zambia–Israel relations, with a focus on agriculture, technology, health and economic development;

9 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. President **Hakainde Hichilema** defends his recent visit to **Tanzania** for President **Samia Suluhu Hassan**'s inauguration, expressing disappointment over domestic criticism and stressing that Tanzania's stability is vital for Zambia's trade and transport links;

6 Nov 2025 **Chingola (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. **Copperbelt** provincial minister, **Elisha Matambo**, pledges government support for traders affected by the **Chiwempala Market**, which destroyed goods belonging to over 3,000 vendors;

3 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. Preparations continue for the **European Union-Zambia Lobito Corridor Business Forum**, to be held from 12 to 14 November, bringing together more than 300 **European** and **Zambian** businesses to promote trade and investment along the Lobito Corridor;

1 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. Acting secretary to the cabinet, **Siazongo Siakalenge** reaffirms the government's commitment to strengthening the coordination, monitoring, and implementation of national development programmes through enhanced collaboration among ministries, provinces, and key stakeholders;

1 Nov 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Reuters*. **Zambia National Commercial Bank (ZANACO)** announces plans to issue the country's first sustainability bond, aiming to raise \$100m to finance environmentally and socially responsible projects;

31 Oct 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Diggers*. Official statistics indicate annual inflation has continued to drop, falling to 11.9% in October from 12.3% in September, with the reduction attributed to price movements in both food and non-food items;

29 Oct 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. President **Hakainde Hichilema** admits that his government has failed to effectively manage the energy sector, citing persistent challenges such as erratic supply, over-reliance on hydro-power and delayed reforms;

29 Oct 2025 **New Delhi (India)** *Live Mint*. **United Kingdom**-headquartered **Vedanta Resources** CEO, **Deshnee Naidoo**, says the company proposes to scale up the \$1 billion investment in its **Zambian** copper unit to develop multiple tailing leaching facilities required to enhance copper production from secondary sources;

27 Oct 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. **Mungwi District** commissioner **Muma Musonda**, says the government is concerned over illegal gold mining in Mungwi, warning that it is causing significant revenue losses and endangering lives;

25 Oct 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. Zambia and **Mozambique** agree to jointly develop a 1,500 MW power generation project along their shared corridor, aimed at boosting electricity supply and strengthening regional energy security under the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** power integration programme;

23 Oct 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. Opposition party **Patriotic Front (PF)** member **Brian Mundubile** declares his candidacy for Zambia's 2026 elections;

23 Oct 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. **China Non-Ferrous Metals Corporation (CNMC)** has reportedly invested \$100m in the ongoing dewatering of Shaft 28 at **Luanshya Copper Mines** on the **Copperbelt**, as part of a larger \$710m investment plan for full mining operations.

23 Oct 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. Zambia signs a \$77m maize export agreement with **Malawi**, marking a major step toward strengthening regional cooperation and enhancing food security in **Southern Africa**;

22 Oct 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. **British Virgin Islands**-registered junior miner, **Arc Minerals**, announces the mutual termination of its 2022 joint venture with the **United Kingdom**-based **Anglo American** for the exploration of a copper project in Zambia, marking another retreat by Anglo American from African operations;

22 Oct 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. **Kalymnos Processing Limited** and **Albertina Mwansa Kashiba** have formally demanded \$2.4 billion in compensation from **Konkola Copper Mines (KCM)** for what they allege to be the illegal extraction of copper ore from their licensed areas in **Chingola**,

18 Oct 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. President **Hakainde Hichilema** commissions Zambia's first pharmaceutical manufacturing plant, developed in partnership with **India's Akums Drugs** to boost local medicine production and health security;

15 Oct 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Lusaka Times*. President **Hakainde Hichilema** praises the strengthening of Zambia–China relations, highlighting increased **Chinese** investment through the **Wonderful Group** and **United Capital Fertiliser** as key to driving economic growth;

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