

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Zambia Monthly Briefing April 2026

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#### Zambia Summary 20 April 2026

*Ahead of the August 2026 general election, the ruling United Party for National Development (UPND) is showing signs of unity and organisation, while the opposition remains fragmented and weakened by internal disputes. Government revises the 2026 national budget to address rising expenditure pressures from increased public servants' salaries against reduced domestic revenues caused by the energy crisis induced by the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Zambia takes a significant step toward strengthening its energy security with the launch of a \$1.1 billion privately funded crude oil refinery in Ndola (Copperbelt Province), which is set to produce 60,000 barrels per day.*

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#### Ruling party unites as opposition remains divided ahead of August vote

The political landscape is shaping up into pre-campaign mode ahead of the August 2026 general election, with the ruling **United Party for National Development (UPND)** showing signs of unity and organisation, while the opposition remains fragmented and weakened by internal disputes. The UPND has moved early to strengthen its position by confirming President **Hakainde Hichilema** (2021-present) as its presidential candidate. This decision was made during the party's general assembly on 15 April, where Hichilema was also [reaffirmed](#) as party president, settling its leadership, and candidate selection well in advance.

In contrast, the opposition is struggling to organise itself, with internal divisions within key parties becoming more visible, raising doubts about their ability to challenge the ruling party effectively. The former ruling **Patriotic Front (PF)** is facing serious leadership disputes; during a recent meeting the **Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ)** organised, the PF was [represented](#) by two different presidential hopefuls, **Makebi Zulu** and **Miles Sampa**. This situation clearly shows that the party has not yet agreed on a single leader or direction.

A similar problem exists within the **National Democratic Congress (NDC)**. The party was [represented](#) at the same ECZ meeting by its president, **Saboi Imboela**, as well as another presidential aspirant, **Arthur Musukwa**. These competing claims reflect ongoing disagreements within the party, which could weaken the opposition and make it harder for them to build a strong, united campaign. The ECZ meeting on 17 April was meant to help political parties prepare for the upcoming election.

At the same time, the ECZ has announced a major change to Zambia's electoral structure following a delimitation exercise, with 70 new constituencies [created](#), bringing the total to 256. Six of these new constituencies are in **Lusaka Province**, an important political area as it has a higher population concentration. While the government says this move is intended to improve representation, it has also caused concern among opposition parties. Some have questioned the timing and motives behind the decision, suggesting it could benefit the ruling party.

There are also growing concerns about recent judicial [appointments](#) Hichilema made. Hichilema on 9 April appointed new supreme court, constitutional court, and high court judges. Hichilema also appointed **Zevyanji Sinkala** as the new ECZ commissioner. Some opposition groups [believe](#) these appointments could influence key institutions ahead of the election. Although the

government says the appointments procedures; the issue has added to the tension between the ruling party and its critics.

### 2026 budget revised on higher spending and lower revenues

The government has approved a revised 2026 national budget to address rising expenditure pressures from increased public servants' salaries against reduced domestic revenues caused by the energy crisis induced by the ongoing conflict in the **Middle East**.

The decision was made at the fifth cabinet meeting held on 9 April, with chief government spokesperson **Cornelius Mweetwa** [announcing](#) that the cabinet approved the revised 2026 budget to address higher-than-anticipated expenditure requirements in the fiscal year. The 2026 budget realignment is intended to restore fiscal balance by accommodating unplanned expenditures and adjusting to revenue shortfalls, while ensuring the continued delivery of public services and implementation of government policies and programmes.

In March, the government suspended value-added tax (VAT) and customs and excise duty on fuel to cushion citizens from high fuel prices. Available estimates [show](#) that Zambia will lose about \$200m in revenue by suspending some fuel taxes to cushion the impact of the **Iran** war on households and businesses. Mweetwa said that while the tax cut measures have provided relief to consumers, they have also resulted in a reduction in domestic revenues, thereby heightening fiscal pressures and [widening](#) the financing gap.

The government did not provide the figures of the revised budget, but finance and national planning minister, **Situmbeko Musokotwane**, in September last year, presented a K253 billion (\$11.17 billion) budget for 2026, with K206 billion (\$9.12 billion) coming from domestic revenue. The budget also emphasised fiscal consolidation, targeting a deficit of 2.1% of GDP – the [lowest](#) in over a decade as the country heads for the 2026 general election. This compares with a revised 2025 deficit of about 4.6%, which rose after drought-related spending and a supplementary budget.

Following the conclusion of the 2026 salary adjustments and improved conditions of service for public service employees, there was a need to accommodate the higher-than-projected public sector wage bill. In February, the government and the public service unions [agreed](#) to increase monthly basic salaries for public service employees by K700 (\$32) across the board following the conclusion of negotiations.

### Zambia boosts energy security with \$1.1 billion oil refinery

Zambia has taken a significant step toward strengthening its energy security with the launch of a \$1.1 billion privately funded crude oil refinery in **Ndola (Copperbelt Province)**, a project spearheaded by **China's Fujian Xiang Xin Corporation** through the **Zambia Petrochemical Energy Company (ZPEC)**. With a planned processing capacity of three million metric tonnes per year, equivalent to about 60,000 barrels per day, the facility is [expected](#) to play a transformative role in supporting fuel-intensive sectors, particularly mining, which remains the backbone of Zambia's economy.

The project comes amid heightened global fuel market volatility driven in part by geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, including the ongoing conflict. These tensions have disrupted supply chains and contributed to price instability, prompting many countries, especially in Africa, to reassess their energy strategies. Historically, Zambia's fuel supply has been constrained by its reliance on imports, primarily through the port of **Dar es Salaam** in **Tanzania** and via pipelines such as the **Tanzania-Zambia Crude Oil Pipeline (TAZAMA)**. This dependence has exposed the country to external shocks, including supply disruptions, currency fluctuations, and rising global oil prices. Domestic demand for fuel has steadily increased over

the years, driven by economic growth and expansion in mining and transportation. However, supply bottlenecks and logistical challenges have often resulted in shortages and high fuel costs, affecting both businesses and consumers.

The Ndola refinery aims to address these challenges by enabling local processing of crude oil, thereby reducing reliance on imported finished products. In its initial phase, crude oil will be [transported](#) by road, with longer-term plans to shift to rail logistics for improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The government has indicated that crude supplies will be sourced from the Middle East and potentially **Angola**, reflecting a diversification strategy designed to mitigate risks associated with overdependence on any single region.

The government's engagement with [alternative](#) suppliers, including Angola, also signals a regional approach to energy security as African nations increasingly look inward and toward neighbouring countries for solutions. The refinery is scheduled for completion before 2028 and if executed well, could reduce fuel costs and Zambia's vulnerability to global fuel shocks.

### Planner

13 May 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) Decision  
 13 Aug 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** General election  
 2028 **Ndola (Zambia)** Ndola refinery expected to be completed

### Chronology

16 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Reuters*. **India's** talks with Zambia over critical minerals mining have stalled amid a lack of assurances from Zambia on mining rights, after India last year received an allocation of 9,000 square km to explore cobalt and copper;

14 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Reuters* Finance minister **Situmbeko Musokotwane** says Zambia will lose about \$200m in revenue by suspending some fuel taxes to cushion the impact of the Iran war on households and businesses;

13 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. The **Zambia Development Agency (ZDA)** participates at the **21<sup>st</sup> Shanghai Metals Market Copper Industry Conference and Expo** courting global investors to tap into Zambia's expanding opportunities in critical minerals and energy;

13 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. Finance minister **Situmbeko Musokotwane** leaves for **Washington DC (United States)** to attend the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** and **World Bank** Spring Meetings, focused on delivering tangible economic results, not symbolic engagement;

13 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. The **Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ)** urges clergy not to use the pulpit to endorse political candidates or parties as the country approaches general elections;

13 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. The **Chinese Mining Enterprises Association of Zambia (CMEAZ)** welcomes the government's decision to allow mining taxes to be settled in Chinese yuan (RMB), describing it as a pragmatic step toward creating a more stable environment for long-term investment;

10 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambia Monitor*. The sixth edition of the **Freedom of Expression (FOX) Report** reveals that 62% of Zambian journalists believe the media does not operate freely, raising concerns about the state of press freedom ahead of the 2026 general elections;

10 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers.** **Energy Regulation Board (ERB)** takes enforcement action against state-owned **Zesco, Uno Energies**, and 27 other companies for breaching licence conditions and failing to meet their statutory obligations;

10 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** Zambia expands its visa-free agreements with several African countries in a move authorities say is aimed at strengthening regional integration and advancing the **African Union's Agenda 2063**;

9 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** Government lifts restrictions on the export of maize grain and maize products, including mealie meal, a decision it says is intended to support farmers and improve market access;

8 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** The **Tonse Alliance** formally requests an urgent meeting with the **Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ)** amid concerns over the proposed **Electoral Process Bill** and the country's electoral roadmap ahead of the 2026 general elections;

8 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Lusaka Times.** A sustainability bond to raise between \$100m and \$200m by year-end, aimed at integrating artisanal miners into formal supply chains, will be piloted by a **Canada-based advisory firm, Veridicor** and a mid-tier Zambian copper miner, **Metalex Commodities**;

5 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** The government says rehabilitation works on the **Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA)** are expected to begin soon, with transport and logistics minister **Frank Tayali** saying that designs for the project are nearing completion;

3 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers.** The **Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA)** approves a government-owned gold processing hub in **Mumbwa District (Central Province)** with a capacity of processing 15 tonnes of gold per annum that will serve as a centralised mineral processing facility for various mines;

2 Apr 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** The constitutional court rules that the continued failure to enact the **Political Parties Act** is unconstitutional and directs the state to ensure the law is in place within 12 months, while maintaining the applicability of the **Societies Act**;

31 Mar 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** Constitutional court dismisses a petition challenging the **Electoral Commission of Zambia's (ECZ)** delimitation exercise, ruling that the process did not violate the constitution;

31 Mar 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers.** Commerce, trade and industry minister, **Chipoka Mulenga**, says government will on 1 April 2026, roll out the first phase of the 24-hour economy by lifting the night travel ban on commercial trucks and buses;

27 Mar 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** Zambia's economy grew 1.6% in the fourth quarter of 2025, slowing sharply from 8.3% in the same period a year earlier, reflecting weaker performance in key sectors;

27 Mar 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers.** The kwacha continues to gain strength against major convertible currencies, reaching K18.6 against the **United States (US)** dollar as of the close of business on 26 March from as high as K25 per US dollar a year ago;

26 Mar 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers.** **Zambia Statistics Agency (ZamStats)** reports that annual inflation slowed for a second consecutive month in March, easing to 7.1% from 7.5% in February, driven by moderated price growth in both food and non-food items;

24 Mar 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers**. The **United States (US)** government dismisses a fake news report by the **New York Times** that it is considering freezing HIV funding until Zambia agrees to a mineral deal;

24 Mar 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers**. **China's SINO Metals Leach Zambia** announces that it has officially commenced clean-up and remediation work in areas affected by the company's mining pollution;

23 Mar 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Lusaka Times**. The ruling **United Party for National Development (UPND)** rejects the election of **Makebi Zulu** as leader of the opposition **Patriotic Front (PF)**, arguing it is unlawful while the PF leadership dispute remains before the courts;

21 Mar 2026 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers**. Finance minister, **Situmbeko Musokotwane**, says the government has signed an agreement with **Italy** to restructure a €94.6m (\$111.5m) debt that Zambia owes to the country;

### About Africa Risk Consulting:

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