

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release, 28th November, 2022

The Clerk of the National Assembly wishes to clarify and put into context the letter of complaint written by Patriotic Front (PF) Member of Parliament to the Hon Madam Speaker on 22nd November, 2022. The letter was published in the Daily Nation Newspaper, edition number 3490 dated Thursday, 24th November, 2022.


Madam Speaker wishes to inform members of the public that on Thursday, 17th November, 2022, the Hon Minister of Finance and National Planning rendered a Ministerial Statement in the House on the engagement of private firms to audit the procurement of goods and services so that the Government ascertains its debt to the suppliers. Among the private firms engaged were Price Water House Coopers and Grant Thornton, who were specifically contracted to audit certain aspects in the Defence and Security wings.

Following the said statement by the Hon Minister, the Assembly spent at least 30 minutes to interrogate the statement. The following day, Friday, 18th November, 2022, during the Vice President's Question Time, two Hon Members of the Patriotic Front asked the Vice President questions on the same subject matter as that of the Ministerial Statement. Although the two questions were inadmissible under the Rules of the Assembly, the Hon Madam Speaker used her sole discretion to admit them. She only acted and curtailed debate on this subject after a third Member attempted to ask a third question. Madam Speaker's discretion to curtail the debate should not, in any way, be understood to be an act of biasness on her part against any Member including Members of Patriotic Front in the House.

Madam Speaker's primary duty is to ensure that the Rules of the Assembly are enforced without fear or favour so that the dignity and decorum of the Assembly is maintained.

In this regard, Madam Speaker was on *terra firma*, and within her province of jurisdiction, to curtail debate because in terms of Standing Order 71(4) of the National Assembly of Zambia Standing Orders, 2021, **a question shall not be admissible if its subject matter was rendered in a Ministerial Statement issued during the same session or is likely to be addressed in a Ministerial Statement already approved by the Speaker for issuance by a Cabinet Minister or the Vice President.**

Members of the Press and the public are, therefore, informed that the Hon Madam Speaker, as a custodian of the Rules of the Assembly is duty bound to ensure that every Member, without exception, abides by the Rules.



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for/**CLERK OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

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