

TUESDAY, 21 JUNE, 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON THE

**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND ELECTRONIC
GOVERNMENT**

BY THE

HON. MINISTER OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION, MR MUSHIMBA

Mr Speaker, I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for according me this opportunity to deliver a ministerial statement on Government's continued accelerated development of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector and highlight notable progress attained in the implementation of electronic-Government.

Sir, ICT, has become an intricate part of our lives. Most of us begin our days with our smart phones in our hands to update us on the world around us. This includes everything from social media and news to education and health, banking and online payments to name but a few. All these aspects of our lives are converging with ICT to create a new value proposition. Zambia is actively transitioning into a society where our citizens, their devices and their data are connecting with one another anytime and anywhere, and yet, we must remind ourselves that, there are still people in our country who are not benefiting from such advanced technologies.

The Government of the Republic of Zambia, with a resounding mandate from the people to His Excellency, President Edgar Chagwa Lungu is committed to transforming all aspects of the economy through leveraging the use of ICTs. The Government's vision in the ICT sector is premised on developing a knowledge-based society that is hyper connected, drawn from our firm belief that the country should be positioned to take its rightful leadership as the hub of communications in southern and central Africa.

Mr Speaker, the Government through my ministry working with established state institutions and the private sector has continued to make steady progress in growing and stabilising the ICT sector through implementation of key sector interventions. These interventions include the review of the existing Licencing Framework, the review of the existing Policy and Legal

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Framework, the strengthening of the Institutional Framework, the repositioning of Zambia Telecommunication (ZAMTEL) and the rollout of e-Government as well as the implementation of key ICT infrastructure projects targeted at increasing access to services countrywide.

Sir, allow me to highlight progress attained in the four specific subsectors of the ICT industry. The first is the creation of an enabling environment through the review of the existing policy and the review of legal and regulatory framework. This Government is revising the existing policy and legal framework in the ICT sector in order to respond to the dynamics of the ICT industry to further enhance the existing conducive environment and ensure that ICT businesses thrive. The National Policy that we are revising is to ensure a strong emphasis on the creation of an innovative market responsive, highly competitive, coordinated and well-regulated ICT industry in line with the technological environment of today.

Mr Speaker, with regard to the review of the excising legal framework, the Government is in the process of unbundling the Electronic Communications and Transaction Act, No. 21 of 2009 into five distinct legislative Acts to be proposed to Parliament enactment, namely; the e-Government Bill; the Cyber Security Bill; the Data Protection Bill; the e-Transactions and e-Commerce Bill; and Cybercrime Bill which is a penal law that will be used to prosecute cybercrime offences.

Sir, the Government will further propose to Parliament to adjust and update the Information and Communications Technology Act No. 15 of 2009, in order to strengthen the regulatory mandate assigned to Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA) and provide the institution with clear enforcement capabilities for execution of statutory rules and procedures outlined in the Act.

Mr Speaker, the Government will also table before the Floor of this august House, the ICT Society of Zambia Bill that aims to legitimately maintain control and oversight of all information and communication technology practice in Zambia as well as safeguard the interest of the public with a view of enforcing acceptable standards in the sector.

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Further, Sir, my ministry has been granted approval by Cabinet to introduce a converged licencing framework in the sector that aims at deepening competition, maximising network utilisation and supporting innovation in the provision of ICT services in Zambia. The new licencing framework will inevitably open up the telecommunications market beyond the current three mobile operators and further ensure provision of value for money through improved quality of services in a competitive environment.

Sir, the second sub-sector is the ICT Infrastructure. The PF Government has embarked on numerous ICT projects to prepare the country for the Fourth Industrial Revolution that will happen on the back of ICT and attain a smart Zambia. You may recall that the Government, through the Universal Access Fund, procured and installed 204 communications towers in Phase I of the communications towers roll-out targeting mostly rural areas of the country. In Phase II, the Government has procured 1,009 bigger, stronger and taller towers for better signal strength and reach to cover more areas of the country based on the nationwide survey that was conducted in an attempt to improve network coverage across the country. Phase II will primarily target dense clusters of settlements and economically active areas in the rural areas such as rural health centres, schools, farming blocks, mines, tourism centres and trading towns.

Mr Speaker, the Government has also completed the construction of a tier three National Data Centre that will provide local cloud services to the Government and the business community at commercial rates for data storage, management, manipulation and analysis. An ICT Centre of Excellence has also been established to provide relevant ICT training and skills. The construction of the data centre is meant for businesses and enterprises not to invest in costly data centres themselves, but pay a reasonable fee for hosting services while they focus on their core business. This data centre is awaiting commissioning.

Sir, the country has continued to witness the rollout of fibre optic throughout the country by the Government and the private sector. The country, through the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation (ZESCO), ZAMTEL and CEC Liquid Telecoms, has deployed a combined total of 12,000 km of fibre optic across the country. This has connected more than eighty-six districts to the nearest point of presence. The rolled out fibre has also inter-connected six countries, laying a

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foundation for Zambia to become a communications hub in the region, which will result in improved quality of communication services and also reduce the cost of communication.

Mr Speaker, the Government is also in the process of establishing a computer assembly plant in the Multi-Facility Economic Zone (MFEZ) whose main goal will be to assemble desktop computers, laptops and tablets, and to supply smart gadgets to Zambia and the region. It will afford people reasonably priced ICT devices, which are a key enabler to increase citizen participation and inclusiveness in this digital economy.

Sir, the third sub-sector involves implementation of electronic Government or e-Government and the delivery of services through electronic platforms. So far, the Government has connected thirty-five institutions to its wide area network (WAN) ensuring cost effective internet connection through the sharing of the available broadband. The implementation of e-Government is intended to improve Government operations and raise the efficiency and quality of service delivery to the citizenry. The Government has developed online transactional services for businesses and citizens that include the following systems:

- (a) the tax online and Asycuda System under the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA);
- (b) the online PACRA System under the Patents and Company Registration Agency (PACRA);
- (c) the Electronic Government Procurement System under the Zambia Public Procurement Authority (ZPPA);
- (d) the Electronic Zambia Information System (e-ZAMTIS) under the Road Transport and Safety Agency (RTSA);
- (e) the e-Voucher System under the Ministry of Agriculture;
- (f) the Electronic Lands Management Information System under the Ministry of Lands and National Resources; and

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(g) the Electronic National Registration System under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

These and many other systems have reduced the time it takes citizens to access various public services.

Mr Speaker, the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) is being integrated to the e-Government Procurement System to ease the way of doing business and improve efficiency. The Government is further poised to reduce the cost of printing payslips by implementing the electronic payslip system that is being piloted with 5,000 Government employees. Further, the ICT sector is also creating a new platform for the 62 per cent of unbanked adults in our country to now access some form of banking services through e-banking platforms such as mobile money.

Sir, in order to support decentralisation and effective accountability of public funds, a Revenue Collection System, fully integrated with a Financial Management System, has been installed in 103 local authorities. The Government is also implementing the Treasury Single Account as a way of improving financial prudence so that the Government does not borrow its own money banked in various commercial banks. The Treasury Single Account will also be used to make payments directly to suppliers.

Mr Speaker, through these interventions, Zambia has earned global recognition and has improved the country's position on the Electronic Government Index from position 142 to position 132. However, much still needs to be done to fully realise the benefits of ICT and make it a mainstay. The Government's target is to move within two digits on the Global e-Government Index in the next three years if we are to successfully implement the programmes and interventions I have spoken about.

Sir, the fourth and last sub-sector is cyber security. The Government takes cognisance of the challenges associated with ICT. As part of its remedial strategy, the Ministry of Transport and Communication has established a sector specific computer emergency response team in

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partnership with the International Telecommunications Unit (ITU) to build confidence and trust in the use of ICT. In addition, data protection laws, national information security and online child protection frameworks are currently being developed by the Government. The Government, through my ministry, recently setup a National Technical Committee on Cyber Security to oversee and coordinate the implementation of various cyber security activities.

Mr Speaker, allow me to conclude by highlighting the positive ICT sector performance to demonstrate the PF Government's commitment to the growth of the sector. The total number of active mobile network subscribers today stands at 12 million representing 75 per cent mobile penetration. Further, the ICT sector has made significant contributions to Zambia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The sector's contribution to GDP stood at 2.8 per cent as of December, 2016 with a significant increase of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the sector compared to previous years.

Sir, I would like to conclude by reiterating the potential that the ICT sector has if fully embraced and adopted to change how we do business, increases efficiency in the economy, create employment and exponentially grow the economy. It is for this reason that the PF Government continues to make strong and concerted efforts in investing in infrastructure, policies and regulation in order to make sure that Zambia is not left behind in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. In five years, we aspire to have a connected Zambia in which citizens access information for better decision making from anywhere.

I thank you, Sir.