

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON THE
STUDENTS LOANS AWARDED TO FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT THE COPPERBELT
UNIVERSITY FOR 2018/2019 ACADEMIC YEAR
BY THE
THE HON. MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, PROF. LUO, MP

Mr Speaker, I wish to thank you most sincerely for according me this privilege and opportunity to respond to a Point of Order raised by the hon. Member of Parliament for Monze Central and Leader of the Opposition, Mr Jack Mwiimbu, MP, regarding the award of students loans to first year students at the Copperbelt University (CBU).

Sir, it is important that before I give this ministerial statement, I emphasise the fact that the Patriotic Front (PF) Government attaches a lot of importance to education, and in particular, high education, skills development and entrepreneurship. This is because education is not only a precursor to economic development for any country but it is also a social and economic equaliser which enables the have-nots to have a fighting chance of living an economically independent and prospective life.

Mr Speaker, it is because of this realisation that my Government places a high premium on education and this is evidenced by the increasing investments in education over the last few years, both in terms of infrastructure development as well as support to the learning environment and support students. In this regard, despite the austerity measures which the Government has embarked on, and the prudent fiscal discipline exhibited in the 2019 Budget which has resulted in budget cuts across the Board, the Government decided to retain student support as at the 2018 provisions.

Mr Speaker, it is important to note that although the Government retained the same budget for student support in 2018, the main recipient of student support, namely, the University of Zambia (Unza) and the CBU increased tuition and other fees, thereby increased the cost of training a student and subsequently, the cost to the Government of supporting students. The two

universities justified the increase as necessary saying that the universities have not increased fees for some time now.

Sir, this august House will be pleased to note that over the last three years, first year enrolment at the two universities increased from an average of 2,000 learners over to 3,000 in each university in terms of student support. In 2018 alone, the Government support was 2,216 learners at Unza and 1,619 at the CBU in the first year alone. However, due to the increased cost of training a student and a limited resource envelope, the number of students who can be supported in 2019 has been reduced.

Mr Speaker, we had a total of 3,956 applicants for loans from prospective first year students going to CBU in 2019 but due to the reasons I have highlighted, only 1,619 learners will be supported. As a result, the loans board decided to introduce a more stringent merit based criteria to augment the vulnerability status.

Sir, the selection of candidates followed the following guidelines:

- (a) 30 per cent of slots of loans were allocated to female students and in this regard, 450 learners were offered loans;
- (b) 30 per cent of the slots were allocated to rural communities and another 450 learners were supported; and
- (c) 40 per cent of the slots were allocated on merit and these represented 719 learners.

Mr Speaker, these guidelines were a combination of geographical location, that is, rural dwelling, gender, vulnerability and merit. Therefore, the distribution was as follows:

- (a) all applicants who obtained five points in all schools were selected;

- (b) all applicants who obtained six points in all schools were selected;
- (c) all applicants up to seven points from rural areas were selected; and
- (d) all female applicants with up to eight points were selected under the female allocation.

Sir, after this exercise, we finally allocated a total of 1,619 candidates which was 119 more learners than the initial allocation for CBU in 2018. The final gender distribution for the selected candidates for 2019 is 40 per cent to female and 60 per cent to male.

Mr Speaker, as I had indicated in my earlier ministerial statements, the 2018/2019 allocation of loans also took into consideration the fact that the resources had to cater for other students who would enter other public universities such as the Mukuba University, Kwame Nkrumah University, Chalimbana University, Mulungushi University and Kapasa Makasa University of Zambia. This has been done to allow students from other public universities to also access loans for their studies. It is not true that only two universities in this country, namely, Unza and CBU, merit support by the Government.

Sir, I must hasten to mention that despite this allocation for the CBU looking small for the number of applicants, most of these applicants are also on the shortlist for other universities and will actually be considered at these universities. In addition, once the recovery platform is strengthened and sufficient funds have been recovered from beneficiaries, additional loans will be provided for needy students across all public universities.

I thank you, Sir.