**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

RESPONSE ON A POINT OF ORDER RAISED BY HONOURABLE JJ MWIIMBU, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR MONZE CENTRAL, ALLEGING THAT THE TIMES OF ZAMBIA NEWSPAPER WAS PUBLISHING SOME ARTICLES IN CHINESE AND, THEREFORE, DISCRIMINATING AGAINST ZAMBIAN LANGUAGES

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING, MS SILIYA

Mr Speaker, this ministerial statement is in a response to a point of order raised by Hon. Jack Mwiimbu, Member of Parliament for Monze Central on Wednesday, 10th October, 2018 alleging that the *Times of Zambia* Newspaper was publishing some articles in Chinese, and therefore, discriminating against Zambian languages.

Mr Speaker, the current status of the Times of Zambia is as follows: There are 286 employees. As of 30th September, 2018, the company had total assets of 86.4 million with liabilities amounting to K748.5 million. This means that the company is technically insolvent with a negative asset value of K662.1 million.

The company also has salary arrears of three to ten months for different categories of staff.

Mr Speaker, the *Times of Zambia* came into being on 7th December, 1970 and merged with the Times Print Park in March, 1993. In January, 2016, the company was taken over by the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) under the Ministry of Finance. Like any other State enterprise, the *Times of Zambia* is expected to generate enough revenue to declare dividends to its shareholders, in this case, the people of Zambia. However, as earlier stated, the *Times of Zambia* has over the years experienced massive financial challenges including obsolete equipment, overstaffing and a rigid business model in an environment disrupted by new online media.

Mr Speaker, in 2015, the Board and Management of *Times of Zambia* began to explore various ways to raise resources for the company. Among the strategies identified was to attract new business through subscriptions and advertising targeted at new commercial communities in Zambia such as the Turkish, the French and the Chinese. It is in this regard that the decision to translate and reproduce some carefully selected stories of the day in Mandarin was arrived at. The *Times of Zambia* hopes that this exposes the paper to potentially new income from a community that would not necessarily be attracted to it because of language barrier.

Mr Speaker, the alleged discrimination against the people of Zambia by the *Times of Zambia* newspaper’s publication of an article in Chinese when there has been no such publication in local languages does not arise.

Mr Speaker, English is the official language of Zambia the language in which the *Times of Zambia* newspaper has always been published. Let me emphasise once again, that all stories published in Mandarin are translated from the English version in the same copy.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.