



Republic of Zambia  
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THURSDAY, 27<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2014 BY HON. DR. JOSEPH KATEMA, MP, MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING SERVICES AND CHIEF GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON ON THE CONDUCT OF SOME SENIOR GOVERNMENT AND PF OFFICIALS ON SUNDAY, 23<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER, 2014 AT ZAMBIA NATIONAL BROADCASTING CORPORATION, ZNBC, NEWSROOM.**

**MR SPEAKER,**

AS DIRECTED, I RISE TO RENDER A MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON THE CONDUCT OF SOME SENIOR GOVERNMENT AND PATRIOTIC FRONT OFFICIALS WHO WENT TO ZNBC ON SUNDAY, 23<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER, 2014, WHERE THEY ARE REPORTED TO HAVE HARASSED AND ORDERED NEWSROOM STAFF TO REMOVE STORIES OF PEOPLE WITH DISSENTING VIEWS FROM THEIRS.

**MR SPEAKER,**

THE PATRIOTIC FRONT GOVERNMENT, AMONG OTHER HALLMARKS, CAME INTO OFFICE ON THE PREMISE OF TAKING POWER TO THE PEOPLE.

AND THERE CAN BE NO BETTER WAY TO DO THIS THAN TO EMPOWER PEOPLE WITH INFORMATION SO THAT THEY MAKE INFORMED CHOICES AND DECISIONS IN THEIR LIVES.

FOR THIS REASON, IT IS PF GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO DEFEND AND PROMOTE THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND EXPRESSION AS ESPOUSED IN ITS PARTY MANIFESTO AS WELL AS THE REPUBLICAN CONSTITUTION.

AND GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA IN THIS REGARD, MR SPEAKER, IS LOUD AND CLEAR:

MR SPEAKER, WE WANT THE MEDIA TO BE THE EYES AND EARS OF THE PUBLIC. WE WANT A MEDIA THAT SERVES NATIONAL RATHER THAN NARROW PARTISAN INTERESTS.

WE WANT A MEDIA, MR SPEAKER, WHOSE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY IS TO INFORM THE PUBLIC TRUTHFULLY, HONESTLY AND OBJECTIVELY.

FOR THIS REASON, MR SPEAKER, THE PATRIOTIC FRONT GOVERNMENT, HAS AND CONTINUES TO UNDERTAKE VARIOUS MEASURES TO REFORM AND REPOSITION THE MEDIA SO THAT IT PLAYS ITS FULL AND RIGHTFUL ROLE IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

THE MEASURES INCLUDE BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE FOLLOWING:

THE INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING AUTHORITY (IBA) IS NOW FULLY OPERATIONAL, MR SPEAKER, WITH BOTH THE BOARD AND MANAGEMENT IN PLACE AFTER OVER A DECADE OF PROCRASTINATION BY THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT.

**MR SPEAKER,**

WE HAVE EMBARKED ON THE MODERNISATION OF THE PUBLIC MEDIA INSTITUTIONS NAMELY ZNBC, TIMES OF ZAMBIA AND ZAMBIA DAILY MAIL IN LINE WITH OUR VISION AND MISSION TO TAKE INFORMATION CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE.

THIS INCLUDES, AMONG OTHER INTERVENTIONS, ENSURING THAT ALL THE THREE PUBLIC MEDIA HOUSES HAVE BOARDS IN PLACE TO DIRECT THE AFFAIRS OF THE INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING RECRUITMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS FOR THESE MEDIA FIRMS.

MR SPEAKER, THE THREE PUBLIC MEDIA HOUSES HAVE, AND CONTINUE TO REBRAND BOTH IN QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF THEIR NEWS - A DIRECT RESULT OF THE AUTONOMY THEY NOW ENJOY.

AND, AS PART OF THE ONGOING MEDIA REFORM PROCESS, MR SPEAKER, THIS GOVERNMENT HAS DE-CONTROLLED AND DE-POLITICIZED THE MEDIA IN ORDER TO INDUCE PROFESSIONALISM AND EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE IN THE NEWSROOMS.

MR SPEAKER, THE HOUSE MAY ALSO RECALL THAT SOON AFTER COMING INTO OFFICE OVER THREE YEARS AGO, THIS GOVERNMENT UNCONDITIONALLY GAVE A GO-AHEAD FOR MEDIA PRACTITIONERS IN THE COUNTRY TO FORM THE ZAMBIA MEDIA COUNCIL (ZAMEC), A NON STATUTORY MEDIA SELF REGULATORY BODY WHICH IS IN PLACE.

FURTHER AND BEYOND THIS, GOVERNMENT HAS ACCELERATED THE ISSUANCE OF RADIO AND TELEVISION LICENCES WITH OVER 70 COMMUNITY AND COMMERCIAL RADIO STATIONS AND NO LESS THAN 12 TELEVISION STATIONS CURRENTLY ON AIR COUNTRYWIDE.

**MR SPEAKER,**

THE AFORE-SAID AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS ARE UNPRECEDENTED AND ARE TESTIMONY OF GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE GROWTH OF A FREE, INDEPENDENT AND PROFESSIONAL MEDIA, A PRE-REQUISITE FOR A FLOURISHING DEMOCRACY SUCH AS OURS.

MR SPEAKER, IT IS AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THAT GOVERNMENT REGRETS THE INCIDENT AT ZNBC WHERE IT IS REPORTED THAT SOME SENIOR PF AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WENT TO ZNBC ON SUNDAY EVENING WHERE THEY HARASSED AND ORDERED NEWSROOM STAFF TO DROP CERTAIN STORIES FROM THE NEWS BULLETIN.

THE INCIDENT, MR SPEAKER, IS UNFORTUNATE AND INCONSISTENT WITH GOVERNMENT'S *HANDS-OFF* POLICY ON THE MEDIA.

ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT, I WISH TO THANK THE ZNBC BOARD FOR PUBLICLY BRINGING TO LIGHT THE REPORTED INCIDENT.

THIS ACTION, IN ITSELF, CONFIRMS THE FACT THAT ZNBC AND THE MEDIA FRATERNITY AS A WHOLE, IS FREE, FREE INDEED, FROM GOVERNMENT CONTROL.

**MR SPEAKER,**

THE HOUSE MAY WISH TO NOTE THAT THE ZNBC ACT NO. 20 OF 2002 AS AMENDED BY ACT NO. 16 OF 2010 EMPOWERS THE CORPORATION TO PROVIDE VARIED AND BALANCED PROGRAMMING FOR ALL SECTIONS OF THE POPULATION AND SERVE PUBLIC INTEREST.

FURTHER, MR SPEAKER, THE ACT CLEARLY STIPULATES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SHAREHOLDER, IN THIS CASE, GOVERNMENT AND THE ORGANIZATION. THE INTERFACE BEING THE BOARD AND THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING SERVICES.

THEREFORE, THERE SHOULD BE NO MISUNDERSTANDING ON THE MANDATE OF ZNBC AND HOW IT RELATES TO GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC IN ITS OPERATION.



**MR SPEAKER,**

THROUGH YOU, MAY I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ADVISE THAT THERE ARE ENOUGH AVENUES FOR PEOPLE TO PURSUE WHEN DISSATISFIED WITH, OR AGGRIEVED BY WHAT THE MEDIA HAS REPORTED.

MR SPEAKER, GOING TO THE NEWSROOM TO INSTRUCT EDITORS TO DROP A STORY IS NOT ONE OF THEM. INSTEAD, AND IN LINE WITH STANDARD MEDIA PRACTICE, NEWS SOURCES DESERVE THE RIGHT OF REPLY SO THAT THEIR VIEWS ARE PUT IN THE CONTEXT THEY WOULD LIKE THEM TO BE.

MR SPEAKER, I WOULD FURTHER LIKE TO GUIDE THAT APART FROM ZNBC IN-HOUSE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE, MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC CAN ALSO CHANNEL THEIR COMPLAINTS TO THE INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING AUTHORITY, IBA, WHOSE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE THE ORGANISATION LAUNCHED RECENTLY WHICH DOCUMENT I NOW LAY ON THE TABLE.

**MR SPEAKER,**

ON THE OTHER HAND, HOWEVER, I WISH TO REMIND THE MEDIA TO MAINTAIN THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF PROFESSIONALISM IN THEIR WORK.

THE MEDIA'S ETHICAL AND PROFESSIONAL OBLIGATIONS SUCH AS ACCURACY, OBJECTIVITY AND BALANCE ARE NON NEGOTIABLE.

AS SUCH, THE MEDIA IS ADVISED TO DESIST FROM "**SINGLE SOURCING**" STORIES BY ENSURING THAT ALL SIDES ARE HEARD ON A PARTICULAR ISSUE ESPECIALLY NOW AS POLITICAL ACTORS COMPETE FOR THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COUNTRY.

AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE, AND I SAY IT AGAIN, THE MEDIA'S LOYALTY SHOULD BE TO THE *TRUTH* AND TO THE PEOPLE OF ZAMBIA AND NOT TO INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR PERSONAL AGENDAS.