

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT  
ON THE  
**MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE RAISED ON THE FLOOR OF THE  
HOUSE BY THE MEMBER FOR CHIENGE PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY  
HONOURABLE GIVEN KATUTA ON THE MOBILE NETWORK SERVICES OF  
AIRTEL NETWORKS ZAMBIA PLC**  
BY THE  
**THE MINISTER OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE (MR MUTATI), MP**

Madam Speaker, I wish to thank you for giving me the opportunity to deliver a ministerial statement to this august House to provide a status update and response to the concerns raised in Parliament by the hon. Member for Chienge Parliamentary Constituency, Hon. Rev. Given Katuta, regarding the rapid depletion of data bundles on the Airtel network.

Madam Speaker, my statement will deal with the following:

- (a) shade more light on efforts being made to implement and enhance transparency in the conduct of mobile service providers; and
- (b) improving consumer awareness around data usage.

Madam Speaker, in the recent months, there has been an increased public outcry particularly on social media platforms regarding the rate at which data bundles on the Airtel network are being depleted. The Government through its regulator, the Zambia Information And Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA) has also received these complaints.

Madam Speaker, the august House may wish to note that prior to implementation of any price for specific Information Communication Technology (ICT) products or services, ZICTA undertakes a comprehensive review process to ensure that the various ICT products and services are:

- (a) fairly priced in line with the principles of cost-based pricing;

- (b) transparent in terms of the information disclosed to consumers over the associated terms and conditions of use; and
- (c) non-discriminatory to ensure equitable access to all services by all segments of the subscriber base.

Madam Speaker, allow me to now turn my attention to the findings from the inspection of the Airtel billing platform. Based on the investigation of the specific complaints that were received, it indeed shows that Airtel bundles were experiencing rapid depletion. This is, however, is attributed to the roll-out of superior network coverage with high-speed internet. This therefore, means that while the data bundle structure has remained constant, the speed of the internet has become faster. For example, it was observed that 1gb of data could easily be depleted in less than ten minutes at speeds being provided by Airtel through normal browsing on social media and watching high resolution videos.

Madam speaker, even in the face of faster internet speed, the Government is however, is still concerned with the persistent complaints on the quality of service from our people.

I wish to inform this august House that the Government has directed the following:

- (a) all mobile network service providers should intensify their consumer awareness and education efforts to ensure that customers are well-informed about how to manage their data usage and are aware of the availability of channels for redress;
- (b) intensify investigations on activities to ensure that where customers are wrongly billed, including dropped calls, they should be refunded accordingly;
- (c) that ZICTA should intensify efforts to periodically conduct cost of service studies to ensure that the pricing in the sector is cost reflective and affordable while still allowing for a reasonable return on investment; and

(d) ZICTA to ensure that all measures that enhance tariff regulation and affordable in the ICT sector are implemented in the medium to long-term.

Madam, as I conclude, I wish to take this opportunity to urge the hon. Member of Parliament for Chienge Parliamentary Constituency and other consumers out there to actively monitor their data usage and report specific incidences of wrongful billing to ZICTA. It is expected that these initiatives will significantly curb the rate of data depletion by customers.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

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