

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
ON
NETWORK CONNECTIVITY CHALLENGE IN CHAMA NORTH
BY THE
THE MINISTER OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE (MR MUTATI), MP

Madam Speaker, I wish to thank you for giving me an opportunity to deliver a ministerial statement to this august House, in response to the concerns raised in Parliament by the hon. Member for Chama North Parliamentary Constituency, Mr Yotam Mtayachalo, MP, regarding the connectivity challenge in his constituency, which is alleged to have affected farmers in Mbazi Ward they failed to receive their farming inputs due to mobile communication network disruption for more than two weeks.

Madam Speaker, in light of the concerns raised by the hon. Member of Parliament, I wish to state from the outset, that I am cognisant of the need for reliable mobile communication connectivity in supporting farmers, who through the use of their mobile phones, access information on the collection of farming inputs. However, we are aware that Mbazi Ward in particular has experienced a communication disruption in the recent past. The ministry has directly engaged the Zambia Telecommunications Company Limited (Zamtel) as the main provider in Mbazi Ward to address the technical challenges, and this has since been resolved.

Madam, the ministry, through the Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA), continues to ensure that all reported issues concerning unreliable mobile telecommunication connectivity are verified and dealt with promptly. Further, the Authority is in the process of upgrading equipment to facilitate monitoring of the quality of service which will be able to show in real time, the availability of service with accuracy. Further, all service providers that will not comply with the quality of service guidelines shall be sanctioned as prescribed in the quality of service guidelines.

Madam Speaker, in this regard, the Government wants to ensure that value added services are available in the rural areas such as mobile money, the Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP),

and the social cash transfer scheme. I have, therefore, directed ZICTA to intensify the undertaking of comprehensive quality of service checks, and it should be in real time to ensure that the availability of quality communication connectivity is in place.

Madam, as I conclude, allow me to state that to ensure enhanced connectivity in unserved and under-served areas such as Chama North Parliamentary Constituency, the Government has committed to continue supporting the construction of tower projects as well as upgrading of existing towers and remains committed to promoting the safety and security of the domestic ICT sector.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.
