

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

DELAYED PAYMENT OF SALARIES AT UNZA AND CBU

Mr Speaker, I thank you for giving me this rare opportunity to render a ministerial statement in response to a point order raised against the hon. Minister of Higher Education by the Member of Parliament for Choma Central, Hon. Cornelius Mweetwa, regarding the delayed payment of salaries at the University of Zambia (UNZA) and the Copperbelt University (CBU), respectively.

Sir, before I give this ministerial statement, let me congratulate the mighty Patriotic Front (PF) for having scooped the chairmanship of Kafue Constituency. Let me also give accolades to Hon. Lubinda who led the team for a job well done.

Sir, from the onset, allow me to thank the lectures of Mulungushi University, Chalimbana University, Kwame Nkrumah University, Kapasa Makasa University and Palabana University for remaining calm in the **works** of delays by management to pay salaries.

Admittedly, there were also delays by the CBU and UNZA to pay lecturers salaries for the month of February, but the lecturers at the CBU exhibited patience and restraint for some time and deserve some level of commendation, although they spoilt it towards the end. What is also interesting in all this was the involvement of students at both the CBU and UNZA, including the student leadership.

Mr Speaker, I wish to inform the nation through this august House that all the processes related to the release of grants by the Treasury to public universities and, in particular, the CBU and UNZA have since been completed and the salaries have since been paid. As I address the House, lecturers at UNZA received their salaries last week while lectures at CBU started receiving their salaries on Monday, 25th March 2019.

Sir, allow me to now address some of the issues surrounding the financing of public universities in Zambia. In giving this information I would like to say that Zambia is not an island and

therefore, the universities in Zambia operate just like another university all over the world. Public universities all over the world have several main sources of income, which include:

- (a) internally generated revenue from research, consultancy services, business ventures, innovation and partnerships;
- (b) user fees from students, which is the largest component of any university financing all over the world and this is the case in Zambia;
- (c) grants from the Government to supplement operational costs; and
- (d) contributions by alumni and this is the case for UNZA, the CBU and the rest of the universities in the country.

I hope the alumni that are found in this august House have been doing their part in contributing to these universities.

Mr Speaker, through these sources of financing, the management of public universities are supposed to ensure that they manage the affairs of the institutions without disruption for the learning calendar.

Mr Speaker, while the point of order was raised against the Minister of Higher Education, it is important for the house to note that the payment of salaries for lecturer fall within the ambit of University Councils through their Management Teams. The Government simply supplements Public Universities through operational grants, which are ideally not supposed to be purely for personal emoluments, but are a supplement to what the Universities raise through user fees and other sources of financing that are highlighted. Because of the role operational grants play in the smooth operations of these intuitions, it is our obligation as Government to consistently continue to meet within the limited resource envelope in the midst of other national competing demands within the education and other sectors.

Mr Speaker, having outlined the way Universities are financed, I wish to state that where institution are managed properly, and within all these sources of income for Universities, it is expected that the operations and learning should not be subjected to any form of disruptions by a slight delay in any of these revenue sources.

Mr Speaker, Universities in around the Sub-Region and on a global scale are on a trajectory off being leaders in running self sustaining projects through research, consultancy and business portfolios. The opposite seems to be the case with some of our Public Universities in Zambia. In addition, the management of the meagre resources being generated by the Universities are not prudently applied. For example, comparatively, the fee structure for a number of our Public Universities and Private Universities in the country. If you compare the fee structure for a number of our public Universities, they are not comparable with private universities. The fees in Private Universities are much lower than those that are in our public Universities such as UNZA and CBU. Despite the apparent differences, private universities have remained afloat in meeting their obligations, to the extent of even undertaking expansion projects within the same user fees as can be seen by University of Lusaka, (UNILUS). This is done with less infrastructure support and no Government grant to Private Universities. The question begging an answer is, what then is the biggest challenge that our public Universities are facing?

Mr Speaker, let me attempt to respond to this. My response to this question is that the challenge is in the way we are managing public institutions. We retain business ventures that are not financially viable and sustain payrolls of such ventures on the backbone of a Government grant. And this is for example, the case of ZAMNET at UNZA. We offer conditions to our staffs that are unattainable and extravagant without consideration of an institution's ability to pay and expect that the grants will meet the burden. Contracts have been given to staff especially Management without clauses that compel them to perform particular duties such resource mobilisation.

Mr Speaker, while it is important for the Government to be considered in the provision of grants, a grant by its nature is not guaranteed and Universities should be managed in such way that they should not suffer disruptions at the slightest distortion in its monthly income. This

why is why it has become imperative for my ministry to critically analyse the state of our Universities and come up with measure to address the maladministration in our institutions, this is a challenge that is urge but my ministry has already started addressing these issues.

Mr Speaker, it is in the need to enhance management effectiveness that my ministry was compelled to embark on a programme to restructure UNZA into a College System. This matter was extensively debated on the Floor of this House, suffice to say, that this restructuring will streamline the operations of the University, hive off unproductive business ventures that continue to be a burden on the resources envelope of the institution and ultimately improve the service delivery. My ministry will also conduct a staff audit to ensure that a productive work force. My ministry will further work on the issues of accountability in these institutions, for example, every institution should separate fund collected for maintenance for sport etcetera, since we do not see and improvement of sporting facilities in all or institutions, and furthermore we don't see much of preventive maintenance of our infrastructure. The question is, where does the money go? UNZA has a school of Veterinary Medicine and given that in Lusaka we do not have robust veterinary clinics, why has UNZA not taken advantage of this readily available opportunity, a low hugging fruit? Why haven't our Universities partnered with mining companies, so that they are not only partners but they can use them for training of student, from exploration to value addition? One may further ask, why has the School of Agriculture not taken advantage of the vast land that UNZA owns to engage in agricultural activities? Instead, what we have been told as a ministry is that these plots are being shared by the staff.

Mr Speaker, as working Government we have already started to implement the restructuring reforms and allow me to report the nation through this House, that the structure for the new University of Zambia College System has be developed and will so start be implemented. Once completed the restructuring process is expected to enhance management capacities at UNZA. The lessons we will draw from UNZA, will reinforce the next course of action for CBU

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I would like to state that the ministry will continue to engage Universities and support their quest to ensure sustainable programmes of action, for resource

mobilisation and other activities that will make Universities what they were yesterday and we will limit disruptions to the learning calendar. My ministry will also continue to support the prudent management of resources and financial independence of all public universities so that can reduce the dependence on Government grants

I thank you, Sir.