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**Republic of Zambia**

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Ministerial Statement on Mobile Communication Towers  
and Mobile Phone Subscriber Identification Module (SIM)  
Card Registration

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Ministry of Transport, Works, Supply and Communication

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**LUSAKA**

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**Mr Speaker,**

I wish to thank you Sir, for according my Ministry this opportunity to issue a Statement on Information and Communication Technologies. I appreciate the honour to have this opportunity to inform this august house and through it the nation on the status of Information and Communication Technologies and the steps that Government is undertaking to ensure that ICT infrastructure and services are made readily available to all citizens and businesses in all parts of the country at competitive and affordable rates.

Government recognises that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are an important enabler to build an information centred society where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge leading to greater productivity, greater competitiveness and sustainable economic growth, a precondition for poverty reduction.

**Mr Speaker,**

ICTs are changing the way governments are functioning across the world. ICTs are driving significant changes at both micro and macro levels through increased effectiveness and reach of development

interventions, by opening up new markets, enhancing good governance and lowering the cost of delivering basic social services.

In view of the foregoing, I wish to state that this Government under the able Leadership of His Excellency, the President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr. Michael Chilufya Sata, is committed to uplifting the social and economic well-being of our people in all parts of the country. In this regard, Government intends to leverage Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as enabler of development.

We are determined to see to it that reliable ICT infrastructure and services are available in all parts of the country at affordable rates to support the various socio-economic development activities.

### **Mr Speaker**

Allow me to give a brief on the status of ICT deployment within the country. When we took over the running of Government in September 2011, there were 7,252,693 Mobile users reflecting a penetration of 54.1 users per 100 inhabitants. In terms of Internet usage, there were 816,000 users giving a penetration of 6.1 users per 100 inhabitants.

Within the two years of being in office, as at end of June 2013, there were 10,666,580 Mobile users, reflecting a penetration of 78.4 users per 100 inhabitants. In terms of usage, there were just over 2,626,840 Internet users giving a penetration of 19.3 users per 100 inhabitants.

This reflects an increase of 47% in the number of mobile users and an increase of 221.9% in the number of Internet users. The figures provide clear testimony of our performance during this short period.

### **Mr Speaker**

Government regrettably notes that whilst the urban areas are reasonably covered in terms of Information and Communication Technologies, a significant proportion of the rural area remains uncovered. This skewed level of Information and Communication Technologies penetration has limited the pace of development interventions considering the multiplier effect that Information and Communication Technologies has on the development of other sectors of the economy.

We are determined as Government to see to it that Information and Communication Technologies infrastructure and services are equitably distributed and are available to and affordable for the greatest possible proportion of the population.

In this regard, Government shall continue to promote the expansion of Information and Communication Technologies infrastructure to cover all parts of the country.

In order to reduce the digital divide between urban, peri-urban and rural areas and to promote the widespread availability and usage of electronic communications services throughout Zambia, my Ministry in June 2012 issued Statutory Instrument No. 38 of 2012, the Information and Communication Technologies (Universal Access) Regulations, 2012.

The Statutory Instrument provides a framework for designating unserved areas and the funding mechanism for the roll-out of towers under Universal Access Fund.

**Mr Speaker**

Government has noted that part of the high cost of ICT services can be attributed to duplication of infrastructure amongst the operators, whose cost are passed on to customers in form of high tariffs for the services.

In order to accelerate the expansion of Information and Communication Technologies and to reduce the cost of deployment, Government on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2013 issued Statutory Instrument No.57 of 2013, the Information

and Communication Technologies (Access) Regulations on Interconnection, Co-location and Access.

The Statutory Instrument provides a legal and regulatory framework for interconnecting and sharing of Information and Communication Technologies infrastructure amongst the licensed operators to support growth of the sector by avoiding duplication of infrastructure, and providing for non-discriminatory access to facilitate delivery of efficient and affordable cost effective services to the customers.

It is expected that where towers and other passive infrastructure exist, and that the infrastructure can accommodate additional loads, the said infrastructure shall be shared and no new towers shall be entertained. This will result in lower cost to operators for rolling out services and maintaining the sites, which should ultimately translate into lower cost to users.

Following the Issuance of the Statutory Instrument, Government in collaboration with the Mobile Communication Service Providers has endeavoured to accelerate the extensions of mobile communication services to cover chiefdoms and other un-served rural areas. Indeed, there is no doubt that extending Information and Communication

Technologies infrastructure to rural areas will render an enormous impact upon the rural communities and the rural economy in general.

**Mr. Speaker**

In order to facilitate the speedy roll out of communication towers and services to cover all chiefdoms and other un-served peri-urban and rural areas, Government through the Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013 completed the tender process and awarded the contract for the roll-out of 169 communication towers to Huawei Technologies Company Limited at a contract value of K70.3 Million. It is expected that by September 2014 all the 169 towers will have been rolled out.

I wish to lay before this august house the list of the 169 sites. I would like to mention that Government will continue to survey other sites that are not covered under the initial 169 sites. The objective is to have a continuous process of roll out of towers until we cover all parts of the country.

There is no doubt that the availability of ICT infrastructure and services in rural areas will render enormous impact upon the rural communities and the rural economy in general. Communities that traditionally travel long distances to communicate whether about business or personal

matters will have instant access to communication services, thereby reducing the cost of travel and doing business.

**Mr Speaker,**

Allow me to touch on an important matter of Mobile Phone Subscriber Identification Module, popularly referred to as SIM card Registration.

Government recognizes the enormous convenience and flexibility, Information and Communication Technology solutions such as electronic payment and mobile money transfer systems have brought to the general welfare of the citizenry. Indeed, Mobile commerce solutions via Global System for Mobile (GSM) phones are increasing on the market mainly due to the convenience, flexibility and increase in the use of mobile phones.

Customers are able to pay for utility services such as water, electricity or indeed transfer money without having to queue or to travel to the service outlets thereby reducing the cost of doing business. However, the growth of E-Commerce depends on good telecommunications infrastructure and security of the systems.

In order to enhance the proliferation of mobile platform solutions to support businesses and needs of citizens, at the same time to protect the interests of citizens, there is need to enhanced security of the systems through implementation of SIM card registration.

**Mr Speaker,**

I would like to mention that most countries have already implemented SIM Card Registration. SIM registration is simply the capturing of identity details of the person to whom the SIM card and number are assigned. Thereby as one buys a SIM card there is requirement to produce a valid national identity.

In this regard, Government on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2011 issued Statutory Instrument No.65 of 2011, the Information and Communication Technologies (Registration of Electronic Communication Apparatus) Regulations, 2011.

The Statutory Instrument makes it mandatory for the sellers of SIM cards and the network operators to capture identity details of persons to whom a SIM card is sold and number assigned.

In terms of implementation, all three mobile service providers have commenced SIM registration. MTN commenced registration on 23<sup>rd</sup>

July, 2012 and has so far registered 2.44 Million subscribers. Airtel commenced SIM registration on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2012 and has so far registered 2.42Million subscribers.

ZAMTEL was the last to commence the exercise as it needed to follow the necessary public procurement process through the Zambia Public Procurement Authority to procure the necessary equipment. Zamtel commenced registration on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012 and has so far registered 404, 602 subscribers.

This gives a total of 5,265,245 registered SIM cards from a total of 10,666,580 active SIM cards.

It is a requirement by law for one to produce a valid national registration card or passport to procure and activate a SIM card. And that an electronic communications service provider shall not provide, sell, register or activate a SIM card in respect of which a person does not provide the valid identification documents.

Taking due cognisance of the law, the progress made, and having due regard for rural areas, Government has set 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2015 as the deadline after which anyone procuring, selling or activating SIM cards

in respect of which a person does not provide valid identification documents shall be reliable for prosecution.

Furthermore, I wish to inform this august house that Government has set 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2013 as the deadline by which all existing SIM cards in circulation that have not been registered ought to have been registered.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to request anyone in possession of electronic communications apparatus that utilises a SIM card and has not yet registered, to register with their electronic communications network or service provider and avoid being inconvenienced come 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 because after 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014 any SIM card that would not have been registered shall be de-activated.

I thank you.