

SPEECH BY

HIS EXCELLENCY MR EDGAR CHAGWA LUNGU


PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE

134TH IPU ASSEMBLY HELD AT GOVERNMENT COMPLEX IN

LUSAKA

SATURDAY, 19th MARCH, 2016



- THE IPU PRESIDENT, HON SABER CHOWDHURY,
- YOUR HONOUR, MRS INONGE MUTUKWA WINA, MP, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA,
- THE PRESIDENT OF THE IPU ZAMBIA GROUP, RT. HON. JUSTICE DR PATRICK MATIBINI, SC, MP, SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA,
- HON SPEAKERS FROM IPU MEMBER PARLIAMENTS,
- HON MINISTERS,
- THE FIRST DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA, HON MKHONDO LUNGU, MP,
- THE SECOND DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA, HON CHIFUMU BANDA, SC, MP
- HON MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,
- MRS DORIS KATAI KATEBE MWINGA, CLERK OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA AND PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES GENERAL OF PARLIAMENT,
- YOUR EXCELLENCY MR MARTIN CHUNGONG, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION,
- MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,
- MEMBERS OF THE PRESS,
- DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,
- LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

ON BEHALF OF THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT, THE PEOPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA AND INDEED ON MY OWN BEHALF LET ME EXPRESS MY DEEP GRATITUDE FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF ADDRESSING THIS HIGH PROFILED MEETING WHICH HAS BROUGHT TOGETHER DISTINGUISHED PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE. AS ZAMBIA, WE FEEL PRIVILEGED TO HOST THE 134TH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU) ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS WHOSE THEME IS **"REJUVENATING DEMOCRACY: GIVING VOICE TO THE YOUTH"**.

THIS IS A HISTORIC MOMENT AS IT IS THE FIRST TIME ZAMBIA IS HOSTING AN IPU ASSEMBLY. THIS DEVELOPMENT FOLLOWS ANOTHER HISTORIC MILESTONE WHICH OUR COUNTRY ACHIEVED THIS YEAR; **THE NEWLY AMENDED CONSTITUTION WHICH I ASSENTED TO ON 5TH JANUARY, 2016.**

THE NEW CONSTITUTION IS A RESOUNDING SUCCESS NOT ONLY FOR MY GOVERNMENT BUT FOR THE PEOPLE OF ZAMBIA AS WELL. IT IS A MAGNIFICENT RESPONSE TO OUR PEOPLE'S ASPIRATIONS AS IT CONTAINS ISSUES THEY HAVE ALWAYS WANTED INCLUDED IN THE CONSTITUTION.

OUR COUNTRY'S JOURNEY TOWARDS A PEOPLE DRIVEN CONSTITUTION CONTINUES AS WE PLAN TO HOLD A REFERENDUM, RESOURCES PERMITTING, SO THAT THOSE ASPECTS OF THE CONSTITUTION WHICH REQUIRE THAT PROCESS, SUCH AS THE BILL OF RIGHTS, MAY BE ATTENDED TO.

ALL THAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED AND HAS YET TO BE ATTAINED CONCERNING THE CONSTITUTION IS A PROMISE AND SIGNAL OF NEW BEGINNINGS FOR OUR COUNTRY. IT IS AN INDICATION OF OUR STRONG COMMITMENT TO MAINTAINING A TRULY DEMOCRATIC ZAMBIA.

OUR COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY EXTENDS BEYOND OUR NATIONAL BORDERS. THIS IS EVIDENCED BY OUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE AND CESSATION OF CONFLICT IN SOME PARTS OF AFRICA ESPECIALLY IN THE 1970S AND SUBSEQUENT DECADES.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT PLAYED A CONSTRUCTIVE REGIONAL ROLE BY SPONSORING THE ANGOLA PEACE TALKS THAT LED TO THE 1994 LUSAKA PROTOCOLS; AND IN 1998, THE COUNTRY TOOK THE LEAD IN EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC). ZAMBIA HAS ALSO PROVIDED TROOPS TO THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING INITIATIVES IN MOZAMBIQUE, RWANDA, ANGOLA, SIERRA LEONE AND DARFUR.

**THE IPU PRESIDENT, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

ON THE HOME FRONT, ZAMBIA HAS HAD CONSECUTIVE PEACEFUL ELECTIONS AND TRANSFER OF POWER FROM THE ONE PARTY STATE GOVERNMENT TO A MULTI-PARTY POLITICAL DISPENSATION. THIS HAS MATURED AND ENHANCED THE DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE WHICH IS MANIFESTED IN THE PEACEFUL CHANGE OF LEADERS THROUGH THE BALLOT AND THE ACCEPTANCE OF ELECTION RESULTS BY INCUMBENT LEADERS.

IT IS OBVIOUS THAT MAINTAINING AND CONTRIBUTING TO DEMOCRACY IN THE REGION AND IN OUR COUNTRY HAS BEEN ONE OF OUR HALLMARKS AND A TRUE REFLECTION OF OUR CONVICTION THAT DEMOCRACY CAN YIELD POSITIVE RESULTS.

OUR COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY, PEACE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE ALSO SPURS US TO ENHANCE OUR INTERACTION WITH LIKE-MINDED NATIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND FORA, SUCH AS THE IPU THROUGH OUR REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTION, PARLIAMENT.

IT IS IN THIS LIGHT THAT ZAMBIA ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO FORA SUCH AS IPU. THIS IS WHY A LOT OF WORK HAS BEEN PUT INTO HOSTING THIS ILLUSTRIOUS EVENT.

THE GENESIS OF OUR JOURNEY FOR HOSTING THE 134TH IPU BEGUN IN 2012 WHEN MY PREDECESSOR, THE LATE PRESIDENT, HIS EXCELLENCY, MR MICHAEL CHILUFYA SATA APPROACHED THE THEN IPU SECRETARY GENERAL, MR ANDERS JOHNSON DURING THE HIGH LEVEL MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) GENERAL ASSEMBLY HELD IN NEW YORK IN SEPTEMBER, 2012 AND EXPRESSED ZAMBIA'S INTEREST IN HOSTING PROSPECTIVE IPU ASSEMBLY.

PRIOR TO THIS, THE LATE PRESIDENT HAD BEEN AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE IPU DURING HIS TENURE AS MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT. HIS REQUEST TO HOST AN IPU ASSEMBLY WAS WELL ANCHORED IN HIS KNOWLEDGE AND APPRECIATION OF THE IPU AND WHAT IT STANDS FOR. THIS WAS AN INDICATION THAT HE BELIEVED IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF WHAT DEMOCRACY IS AND I QUOTE;

“DEMOCRACY IS BASED ON THE EXISTENCE OF WELL-STRUCTURED AND WELL-FUNCTIONING INSTITUTIONS, AS WELL AS, ON A BODY OF STANDARDS AND RULES AND ON THE WILL OF SOCIETY AS A WHOLE, FULLY CONVERSANT WITH ITS RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES” END OF QUOTE.

THIS IS A SENTIMENT THAT I TOO BELIEVE IN AND I STAND HERE TODAY PROFOUNDLY CONVINCED ABOUT OUR UNWAVERING COMMITMENT BY MY GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE OF ZAMBIA TO ENHANCE OUR DEMOCRACY BY SUPPORTING THIS CAUSE.

STRONG PARLIAMENTS CONTRIBUTE TO STRONG DEMOCRACIES. THEY ACT AS CONDUITS FOR BUILDING AND MAINTAINING DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES.

THIS IS BECAUSE STRONG REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS CARRY, TRANSMIT AND PROVIDE PLATFORMS WHERE THE CHALLENGES, VIEWS AND HOPES OF THE PEOPLE CAN BE TABLED AND DISCUSSED IN A COORDINATED MANNER WITH THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF FINDING WORKABLE AND AMICABLE SOLUTIONS.

AS A RESULT, PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE INCLUDING THE YOUTH WHO FACE WHAT MIGHT SEEM TO BE INSURMOUNTABLE CHALLENGES SUCH AS UNEMPLOYMENT, ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AND OTHERS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY OR CHANNEL THROUGH WHICH THEY CAN RELAY THEIR CONCERNS AND SHARE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.

IT IS, THEREFORE, GRATIFYING TO NOTE THAT THE THEME OF THE 134TH IPU, "**REJUVENATING DEMOCRACY, GIVING VOICE TO THE YOUTH,**" CENTRES ON THE YOUTH WHO ARE THE FUTURE GENERATION AND FOR WHOM MOST OF THE DECISIONS WE MAKE TODAY, WHETHER THEY BE SOCIAL, POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC, WILL BE GREATLY AFFECTED.

THE CHOICE OF THIS THEME ALSO GIVES CREDENCE TO THE IMPORTANCE THE IPU ATTACHES TO MATTERS AFFECTING THE YOUTH IN ALL REGIONS OF THE WORLD INCLUDING ZAMBIA.

**THE IPU PRESIDENT, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;**

OUR COUNTRY IS JUST FROM COMMEMORATING YOUTH DAY WHICH FELL ON 12TH MARCH WHOSE THEME WAS

“YOUTH: CHAMPIONS OF DIALOGUE, PEACE, UNITY AND ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION” THIS THEME RESONATES WELL WITH THE IPU THEME ESPECIALLY WITH RESPECT TO YOUTH AS CHAMPIONS OF DIALOGUE AND ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION.

ZAMBIA HAS ALWAYS BEEN PASSIONATE ABOUT ISSUES TO DO WITH THE YOUTH. THIS IS NOT SURPRISING AS THE YOUTH FORM THE MAJORITY OF OUR POPULATION. THUS, WE HAVE SPARED NO EFFORT IN COMING UP WITH INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF OUR YOUTH AND TO PROVIDE THEM WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO DO SO.

AS ZAMBIA, WE SUBSCRIBE TO VARIOUS PLANS, INSTRUMENTS AND POLICIES OF INTERNATIONAL, CONTINENTAL AND REGIONAL BODIES WHICH OUTLINE STRATEGIES THAT COULD BE IMPLEMENTED TO IMPROVE THE WELFARE OF THE YOUTH IN OUR COUNTRY AND ON THE CONTINENT.

FOR EXAMPLE, AS MEMBERS OF THE AFRICAN UNION (AU), WE AGREE WITH THE AFRICAN VISION FOR THE YOUTH AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE AFRICAN YOUTH DECADE (2009 – 2018) ACTION PLAN WHICH EMPHASISES ACCELERATING YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

**THE IPU PRESIDENT, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;**

THE AFRICAN YOUTH DECADE ACTION PLAN HAS GIVEN US IMPETUS TO ALIGN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND PRIORITIES. OUR NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY OF 2015 RUNS ALONG THE SAME THEME, IT IS GEARED TOWARDS ATTAINING A **“SKILLED, ENLIGHTENED, ECONOMICALLY EMPOWERED AND PATRIOTIC YOUTH IMPACTING POSITIVELY ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT”**.

THE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY OF 2015 IS STRUCTURED AROUND KEY AREAS WHICH INCLUDE EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH AND CULTURAL, CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND SPORT. IT HAS BEEN OBSERVED THAT YOUNG PEOPLE PLAY ONLY A MINOR ROLE IN ZAMBIA'S DECISION MAKING ARENAS EVEN THOUGH MUCH OF GOVERNMENT POLICY HAS A DIRECT OR INDIRECT IMPACT ON THEIR DAILY LIVES.

THEREFORE, IN IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY WITH OUR PARTNERS, WE WANT TO PROMOTE THE INCLUSION AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES, POLICY DEVELOPMENT, PROGRAMMING AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION, AS OUTLINED IN THE POLICY.

MY GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO PUT IN PLACE, THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FUND WHICH IS A RESPONSE TO REQUESTS FROM THE YOUTH FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO START VARIOUS PROJECTS SO THAT THEY COULD EARN A LIVING AND CONTRIBUTE TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

**THE IPU PRESIDENT, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**

IT IS OUR CONVICTION THAT INVESTING IN THE YOUTH IS A WORTHWHILE ENDEAVOUR BECAUSE OF THEIR POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE TO OUR COUNTRY'S ECONOMY. APART FROM THE ARRANGEMENT FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT, WE HAVE ALSO ESTABLISHED THE NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL WHICH IS THE PRINCIPAL ADVISOR TO GOVERNMENT ON YOUTH MATTERS AND OVERSEES THE REGISTRATION OF YOUTH ORGANISATIONS IN THE COUNTRY.

AT BASIC LEVEL, THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO INTRODUCED CIVIC AND VOTER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN SCHOOLS AS A WAY OF SENSITISING YOUNG PEOPLE ON THEIR ROLE IN CIVIC DUTIES AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS.

THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT WANTS THE YOUTH TO BE INVOLVED IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS EVEN AT POLITICAL LEVEL BY REACHING OUT FOR PARLIAMENTARY CAREERS, MINISTERIAL POSITIONS IN GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL.

**THE IPU PRESIDENT, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;**

I AM COGNISANT OF THE FACT THAT THERE ARE A NUMBER OF YOUTH WHO ARE INNOVATIVE NOT ONLY IN THE POLITICAL ARENA, BUT ALSO IN OTHER SPHERES OF LIFE. THIS IS WHY IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR US TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM TO EXPLORE AND TEST THEIR IDEAS AND INITIATIVES. AS WE ALL KNOW, THE YOUTH TEND TO BE ADVENTUROUS AND ARE NOT AFRAID TO TRY OUT NEW THINGS.

HOWEVER, AS WE TALK ABOUT GIVING THE YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPLORE THEREBY CONTRIBUTING TO DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY IN OUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES AND EMPOWERING THEM, WE SHOULD NOT FORGET THAT, POWER, AUTHORITY, GOOD OPPORTUNITIES, AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES WHEN ENTRUSTED TO INEXPERIENCED INDIVIDUALS WILL NOT YIELD POSITIVE RESULTS OR OUTCOMES.

IT IS THEREFORE INESCAPABLE FOR US TO EMPOWER THE YOUTH WITH GOOD SENSE, GOOD JUDGEMENT, SHREWDNESS AND THE ABILITY TO LOOK BEYOND PRESENT ACTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES.

WE NEED TO GUIDE THEM WHILST GIVING THEM THE SPACE TO BE CREATIVE AND AMBITIOUS. WE NEED TO EQUIP THEM WITH THE SENSE TO BE RESPONSIBLE SO THAT THEY CAN MATURE INTO WELL-ADJUSTED INDIVIDUALS ABLE TO PLAN PROPERLY, HANDLE THE CHALLENGES AND CONSEQUENCES THAT COME WITH BEING ENTRUSTED WITH AUTHORITY, POWER AND RESOURCES.

ONCE WE TAKE THIS APPROACH, WE WILL GIFT THEM WITH THE CONVICTION AND MOTIVATION THAT **“AMBITION NEVER COMES TO AN END”** AS STATED BY ONE GREAT SON OF AFRICA, DR KENNETH KAUNDA, THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA.

**THE IPU PRESIDENT, DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;**

AS ZAMBIA, WE FEEL THE ISSUE OF EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE IS LONG OVERDUE. WE NEED TO SHIFT FROM RHETORIC TO ACTION. I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT IT IS ASSEMBLIES SUCH AS THE 134TH IPU WHICH WILL PROMPT OUR REALISATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CONCRETISING ALL OUR BRILLIANT IDEAS AND TRANSLATING THEM INTO REALITY.

I WOULD LIKE TO CONCLUDE BY ECHOING THE WORDS OF ANOTHER SON OF AFRICA, KOFI ANNAN AND FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS WHO ONCE SAID:

“YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF GLOBAL CHANGE AND INNOVATION. EMPOWERED, THEY CAN BE KEY AGENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE. IF, HOWEVER, THEY ARE LEFT ON SOCIETY’S MARGINS, ALL OF US WILL BE IMPOVERISHED. LET US ENSURE THAT ALL YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE LIVES OF THEIR SOCIETIES.”

WITH THESE REMARKS, LET ME EXTEND MY WARM WELCOME TO ALL OF YOU FOR COMING TO OUR BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY WHICH I BELIEVE YOU WILL EXPLORE IN YOUR FREE TIME. I WISH ALL OF YOU GATHERED HERE FOR THE 134TH IPU ASSEMBLY THEMED ***“REJUVENATING DEMOCRACY, GIVING VOICE TO THE YOUTH,”*** SUCCESSFUL AND FRUITFUL DELIBERATIONS AND OUTCOMES THROUGH RESOLUTIONS WHICH WILL DRIVE OUR DEMOCRACIES A STEP FURTHER IN OUR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES AND PARLIAMENTS. I NOW OFFICIALLY DECLARE THE 134TH IPU ASSEMBLY OPENED.

I THANK YOU.