

**SPEECH BY THE NGOCC BOARD CHAIRPERSON MS. BEAUTY KATEBE DURING
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY COMMEMORATION HELD IN KASAMA, ON
SATURDAY, 8TH MARCH 2025**

**THE GUEST OF HONOUR, YOUR EXCELLENCY MR. HAKAINDE HICHILEMA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA,
MS. MAINGA KABIKA, PERMANENT SECRETARY, GENDER DIVISION,
THE PROVINCIAL MINISTER FOR NORTHERN PROVINCE,
OTHER CABINET MINISTERS PRESENT,
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,
JUDGES PRESENT,
PERMANENT SECRETARIES PRESENT,
THE UNITED NATIONS RESIDENT COORDINATOR,
AMBASSADORS AND HIGH COMMISSIONERS PRESENT,
OTHER MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS,
REPRESENTATIVES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS,
SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS,
REPRESENTATIVES OF POLITICAL PARTIES,
MEMBERS OF THE PRESS,
INVITED GUESTS,**

IT IS AN HONOR TO STAND BEFORE YOU TODAY ON THIS SPECIAL OCCASION OF
**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY: A DAY TO CELEBRATE THE PROGRESS WE HAVE
MADE TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY AND TO REAFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO
ADVANCING THE RIGHTS, DIGNITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS
EVERYWHERE.**

THE THEME FOR THIS YEAR’S INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY: **"FOR ALL WOMEN
AND GIRLS: RIGHTS. EQUALITY. EMPOWERMENT."** IS A POWERFUL REMINDER
THAT THE MATTER OF GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY IS A RIGHT FOR EVERYONE
AND THAT DELIBERATE EFFORTS MUST BE MADE TO EMPOWER WOMEN SO THAT

WE TOO MAY PARTICIPATE FULLY IN ALL NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES IN A JUST AND EQUITABLE ZAMBIA.

A SOCIETY WHERE EVERYONE, REGARDLESS OF THEIR GENDER, ENJOYS THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS, HAS ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES AND CONTROL OVER RESOURCES.

GUEST OF HONOUR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

WHILE NOTING SOME SIGNIFICANT STRIDES THAT WE HAVE MADE AS A COUNTRY WE MUST ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE THE CHALLENGES THAT STILL PERSIST AND THESE ARE MANY.

AS WE CELEBRATE TODAY, WE RECOGNIZE THE SIGNIFICANT STEPS BEING TAKEN TO ADDRESS THE RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN.

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ZAMBIA CONTINUE TO FACE OBSTACLES TO THEIR FULL PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETAL PROCESSES UNDERPINNED BY ENTRENCHED PATRIARCHY.

THIS REFLECTS IN VARIOUS WAYS INCLUDING IN THE LOWER NUMBERS OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS, AS WELL AS THE ONGOING UGLY HEAD OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

EXISTING INEQUITIES FURTHER RESTRICT THE ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE OF MANY WOMEN.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE INFRINGES ON THE BASIC HUMAN RIGHT OF SAFETY WITH STATISTICS INDICATING THAT AN AVERAGE OF 73% OF THE VICTIMS ARE WOMEN AND GIRLS.

HENCE THE NEED TO CONTINUE ADVOCATING FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND THE DISMANTLING OF THE BARRIERS THAT PERPETUATE INEQUALITY REMAINS CENTER IN ALL WE DO AS NGOCC.

GUEST OF HONOUR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

AS THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY SUGGESTS, GENDER EQUALITY IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT AND NOT A FAVOUR.

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS NOT PRESCRIPTIVE TO MEN ONLY AND NEITHER ARE OTHER CONTINENTAL AND REGIONAL PROTOCOLS THAT WE ALL ARE AWARE OF.

THIS MUST REFLECT IN THE WAY WE DO THINGS AS A COUNTRY.

A GLARING FACT IS THAT WE REMAIN BEHIND IN SOME INDICATORS SUCH AS WOMEN'S **POLITICAL REPRESENTATION**, BE IT AT PARLIAMENT OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVELS.

WE KNOW THAT WOMEN'S VOICES IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES ARE CRUCIAL TO ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY ESPECIALLY THAT WOMEN REPRESENT 51% OF OUR POPULATION, IT IS OUR RIGHT TO CLAIM THE A 50/50 REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP.

EQUAL ACCESS TO RESOURCES IS FUNDAMENTAL IN A JUST SOCIETY.

THE 2022 LIVING CONDITIONS MONITORING SURVEY RESULTS SHOW THAT 60 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION WAS LIVING BELOW THE NATIONAL POVERTY LINE AND THAT 634 OUT OF EVERY 1000 FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS WERE POOR AT NATIONAL LEVEL COMPARED TO 588 OUT OF EVERY 1000 AMONG MALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS.

THIS SUGGESTS THE NEED TO IMPROVE WOMENS ACCESS TO PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES SUCH AS LAND AND FINANCES.

WE ARE GLAD THAT THE 2021 LAND POLICY PROVIDES FOR 50 PERCENT EQUAL ALLOCATION OF LAND TO WOMEN AND MEN.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION MUST BE ACCELERATED IF THIS IS TO BE ACTUALISED. WE CANNOT CLAIM TO EMPOWER WOMEN WHEN THEY DO NOT OWN PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES.

MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE INCLUDING THE CONTINUED STRENGTHENING OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES AND ENHANCING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EXISTING EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES THAT WILL HELP IMPROVE THEIR LIVES.

IN THE ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE NATIONAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES ON FRIDAY 28TH FEBRUARY, HE MENTIONED GOVERNMENTS INTENTION TO **DELIMITATE THE LARGE CONSTITUENCIES** AS ONE WAY OF ENSURING FAIRER REPRESENTATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES.

IF GOVERNMENT WILL MOVE FORWARD WITH THIS PROCESS, WE WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT THOSE ENTRUSTED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF DELIMITATING CONSTITUENCIES SHOULD APPROACH IT WITH AN UNDERSTANDING THAT ZAMBIA IS NOT A COLLECTION OF POLITICAL STRONGHOLDS BUT A **DIVERSE AND UNITED NATION**.

AS SUCH THE NEED TO DELIMITATE SHOULD BE BASED ON THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS AS OUTLINED BY THE CRITERIA SUCH AS POPULATION GROWTH AMONG OTHERS.

CONSTITUENCIES SHOULD NOT BE SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF POLITICAL PARTIES OR VOTING PATTERNS BUT SHOULD INSTEAD REFLECT A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO NATIONAL UNITY AND INCLUSIVITY WHICH MEETS THE NEEDS OF ALL COMMUNITIES.

THIS ALSO PRESENTS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CONVERSATIONS AROUND HOW THE EXERCISE WILL CONTRIBUTE TO MORE INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND OTHER MARGINALIZED GROUPS IN POLITICAL OFFICE.

WOMEN FACE UNIQUE CHALLENGES IN ACCESSING POLITICAL SPACES DUE TO DEEPLY ENTRENCHED GENDER NORMS AND INEQUALITIES AS WELL AS A LACK OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION THROUGH LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS.

THIS IS IN LINE WITH OUR ONGOING ADVOCACY TO INCREASE THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT THROUGH MIXED MEMBER

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION AND ENSURE THAT WOMEN'S VOICES ARE HEARD IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES OF THIS COUNTRY.

TO THIS END NGOCC LAUNCHED A CAMPAIGN DUBBED **"HER TIME IS NOW"**. IT IS A CLARION CALL TO ZAMBIANS TO VOTE FOR WOMEN IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS.

THIS MUST START WITH POLITICAL PARTIES ENSURING THAT THEIR ADOPTION OF CANDIDATES AT BOTH PARLIAMENTARY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVELS REFLECT A 50/50 REPRESENTATION.

GEUST OF HONOUR,

LET ME ALSO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CALL ON WOMEN TO COME FORWARD AS POTENTIAL CANDIDATES NOW AND NOT TO WAIT UNTIL NEXT YEAR WHEN IT WILL BE TOO LATE.

THROUGH OUR MEMBER ORGANISATION, THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S LOBBY, WE ARE BUILDING A DATA BASE OF ALL WOMEN THAT WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTIONS NEXT YEAR.

MY DEAR SISTERS, DAUGHTERS AND NIECES, PLEASE MAKE YOUR INTENTIONS KNOWN NOW.

OUR IS TO ALSO ENSURE THAT ALL THE WOMEN THAT ARE CURRENTLY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND COUNCILORS ARE RETAINED AND THAT MANY MORE ARE SUCCESSFULLY ELECTED.

THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP WILL REFLECT THE DIVERSE NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF OUR NATION AND HELP US BUILD A STRONGER AND MORE INCLUSIVE ZAMBIA.

IT'S A KNOWN FACT THAT WOMEN LEADERS BRING FRESH PERSPECTIVES AND SOLUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES SUCH AS EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE AS THEY ARTICULATE THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCES.

GUEST OF HONOR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

AS WE CONTINUE DOWN THIS PATH, LET US REMAIN STEADFAST IN OUR COMMITMENT TO ENSURING THAT **NO WOMAN OR GIRL IS LEFT BEHIND**.

EVERY WOMAN, FROM THE URBAN CENTERS TO THE RURAL HEARTLANDS, DESERVES TO LIVE IN A ZAMBIA WHERE HER RIGHTS ARE UPHELD, HER POTENTIAL IS RECOGNIZED AND SUPPORTED AND HER CONTRIBUTIONS ARE VALUED.

GUEST OF HONOR, ALLOW ME TO FOCUS ON SOME SPECIFIC REQUESTS

1. WE MUST QUICKLY, AND TOGETHER, COME UP WITH STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING THAT MORE WOMEN GET INTO PARLIAMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT POSITIONS COME 2026.

HENCE, WE NEED CLEAR STRATEGIES FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION INCLUDING LEGISLATIVE CHANGE.

EQUAL ACCESS TO POLITICAL OFFICE IS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT FOR WOMEN.

2. WE RECOGNIZE THAT ANY SUCCESS IN EQUAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION MUST START AT POLITICAL PARTY LEVEL.

WE CALL ON YOU AS THE PARTY IN POWER TO LEAD THE WAY BY NOMINATING 50/50 WOMEN AND MEN IN NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS AS PRESCRIBED BY INTERNATIONAL PROTOCOLS WHICH WE ARE A PART TO.

IN BROADENING THIS CALL TO ALL POLITICAL PARTIES, WE RECOLLECT THAT THERE IS A POLITICAL PARTY BILL SITTING SOMEWHERE IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS. WE CALL FOR THE URGENT ENACTMENT OF A POLITICAL PARTY LAW THAT WILL COMPEL POLITICAL PARTIES TO ADOPT CANDIDATES EQUITABLY.

3. FOR EQUAL REPRESENTATION IN DECISION MAKING POSITIONS, ARTICLE 259 OF THE CONSTITUTION MUST BE FULLY ACTUALIZED IN ALL PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS TO ENSURE EQUITY.

WE MUST COMMEND YOU THAT THERE HAS BEEN AN IMPROVEMENT IN YOUR RECENT APPOINTMENTS IN THIS REGARD. THIS WE CAN NOT TAKE AWAY FROM, THOUGH WE FEEL MORE CAN STILL BE DONE SINCE WE ARE STILL BELOW THE DESIRED PARITY.

4. WE CALL FOR THE PRESIDENT TO UPHOLD THE CONSTITUTION OF ZAMBIA BY ESTABLISHING **THE GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY COMMISSION**. THIS IS TO ENSURE THAT THERE IS A NATIONAL MONITORING MECHANISM FOR GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY ACROSS ALL SPHERES INCLUDING BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS.
5. WE CALL FOR THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ANTI GBV ACT OF 2011 BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ANTI GBV FUND AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SAFE HOUSES IN ALL THE DISTRICTS.

GBV ERODES THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND TAKES AWAY THEIR DIGNITY.

YOUR HONOUR, MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, AGAIN, IN YOUR ADDRESS TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY A WEEK AGO, YOU OUTLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY, EQUITY, EQUALITY, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. THESE TENETS EXIST ONLY ON PAPER IF HALF THE POPULATION IS NOT EQUALLY REPRESENTED IN CRITICAL POSITIONS THAT DRIVE THE DIRECTION OF THIS NATION.

HENCE YOUR EXCELLENCY, WE DEMAND FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION BACKED BY A LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO ENSURE THAT MORE WOMEN ARE ELECTED AT ALL LEVELS.

IF YOUR GOVERNMENT ACTS ON THIS CALL YOU WILL SURELY GO INTO THE ANNALS OF HISTORY AS THE FIRST ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT HICHILEMA TO DEVISE AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FRAMEWORK THAT WILL BRING GENDER PARITY IN PARLIAMENT AND AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL.

IN CLOSING, I ONCE AGAIN EXPRESS MY DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO YOU GEUST OF HONOUR FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP AND ONGOING EFFORTS TO ENSURE THAT WOMEN AND GIRLS ARE AT THE HEART OF ZAMBIA'S DEVELOPMENT.

TO THE WOMEN AND GIRLS OF ZAMBIA

TOGETHER, WE CAN CONTINUE TO BUILD A ZAMBIA WHERE **RIGHTS, EQUALITY, AND EMPOWERMENT** ARE NOT JUST IDEALS BUT EVERYDAY REALITIES FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS. YOU ARE OUR STRENGTH, OUR HOPE, AND OUR FUTURE.

YOU ARE ALREADY CHANGING THE WORLD IN EVERY WAY IMAGINABLE.

YOUR COURAGE AND RESILIENCE, HOLDS THIS NATION TOGETHER.

WE HONOR YOU AND PLEDGE TO CONTINUE ADVOCATING FOR YOUR RIGHTS, EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT.

THANK YOU.

HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY!

GOD BLESS ZAMBIA,

GOD BLESS ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS OF ZAMBIA!