

**SPEECH BY THE NGOCC BOARD CHAIRPERSON, MS.
BEAUTY KATEBE, AT THE NGOCC 40TH ANNIVERSARY GALA
DINNER TO BE HELD AT THE GOLDEN PEACOCK HOTEL IN
LUSAKA, ZAMBIA, ON 19TH SEPTEMBER 2025**

**HER HONOUR, THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF ZAMBIA, HON. W.K. MUTALE NALUMANGO,**

**THE AMBASSADOR OF SWEDEN IN ZAMBIA AND SPECIAL
REPRESENTATIVE TO COMESA,**

THE PERMANENT SECRETARY – GENDER DIVISION,

NGOCC BOARD MEMBERS,

**SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS PRESENT,
MANAGING DIRECTOR, ACCESS BANK ZAMBIA,**

OUR COOPERATING PARTNERS,

EMINENT WOMEN LEADERS,

LEADERS OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS,

MEMBERS OF THE PRESS,

DISTINGUISHED INVITED GUESTS,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I STAND BEFORE YOU THIS EVENING WITH DEEP GRATITUDE AND IMMENSE PRIDE AS WE COMMEMORATE 40 YEARS OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL GENDER ORGANISATIONS' COORDINATING COUNCIL (NGOCC).

WHAT BEGAN IN 1985 WITH ONLY NINE PIONEERING ORGANISATIONS, UNITED BY ONE COMMON CAUSE, – THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY IN ZAMBIA – HAS TODAY GROWN INTO A FORMIDABLE COALITION OF 117 MEMBER ORGANISATIONS SPANNING NGOS, COMMUNITY-BASED GROUPS, AND FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS.

TOGETHER, THESE ORGANISATIONS HAVE SHAPED POLICY, EMPOWERED WOMEN ECONOMICALLY, AND FOUGHT TIRELESSLY AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

TONIGHT, WE ARE NOT SIMPLY CELEBRATING AN ANNIVERSARY.

WE ARE HONOURING A LEGACY OF RESILIENCE, ADVOCACY, AND TRANSFORMATION.

FOR FOUR DECADES, NGOCC HAS BEEN AT THE FOREFRONT OF ZAMBIA'S WOMEN'S MOVEMENT:

- CHAMPIONING LAND RIGHTS AND CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE FOR RURAL WOMEN,**
- DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF EVERY GIRL TO REMAIN IN SCHOOL EVEN IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES SUCH AS EARLY PREGNANCIES,**
- AND AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF THE MARGINALISED, WHILE SERVING AS A TRUSTED PARTNER IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.**

GUEST OF HONOUR, ALLOW ME TO REMIND OURSELVES OF WHERE WE HAVE COME FROM AS WOMEN IN THIS COUNTRY, BUT TO MENTION:

- FEMALE TEACHERS WHO BECAME PREGNANT WERE INSTANTLY DISMISSED AND BLACKLISTED, WHILE PREGNANT SCHOOLGIRLS WERE DENIED THE RIGHT TO RETURN TO SCHOOL.
- MARRIED WOMEN IN THE CIVIL SERVICE COULD ONLY BE EMPLOYED ON TEMPORAL TERMS, NEVER PERMANENT OR PENSIONABLE.
- SINGLE WOMEN WHO MARRIED WHILE IN SERVICE WERE IMMEDIATELY DISCHARGED.
- WORKING WOMEN WERE TAXED MORE HEAVILY THAN THEIR HUSBANDS UNDER THE “ZERO-CODING” SYSTEM.
- HOUSING RIGHTS WERE DISCRIMINATORY – A SINGLE MALE EMPLOYEE QUALIFIED FOR EMPLOYER ACCOMMODATION, WHILE A SINGLE FEMALE DID NOT.
- MARRIED WOMEN COULD NOT ACCESS BETTER HOUSING EVEN WHEN THEY QUALIFIED AHEAD OF THEIR HUSBANDS.

- JOINT PROPERTY IN MARRIAGE WAS AUTOMATICALLY REGARDED AS BELONGING TO THE HUSBAND.
- INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WAS UNRECOGNISED, TREATED AS JUST ANOTHER ORDINARY DAY.
- AND THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW) HAD NOT BEEN DOMESTICATED.

THESE WERE THE REALITIES. AND YET, BECAUSE OF THE COURAGE OF TRAILBLAZING WOMEN AND MEN, ZAMBIA BEGAN TO CHANGE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

WE PAY TRIBUTE TO THOSE PIONEERS WHOSE SACRIFICES LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR NGOCC. THEIR VISION AND TENACITY INSPIRED MILESTONES, INCLUDING:

1. HOSTING THE SECOND PREPARATORY WORKSHOP FOR THE BEIJING WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN.
2. PRODUCING THE FIRST-EVER REPORTS ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, SPOTLIGHTING GLARING GENDER GAPS.
3. SUCCESSFULLY ADVOCATING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION AT CABINET OFFICE.
4. PARTICIPATING IN THE FORMULATION AND ADOPTION OF ZAMBIA'S FIRST-EVER NATIONAL GENDER POLICY.
5. PUSHING FOR THE INHERITANCE ACT TO PROTECT WIDOWS, WIDOWERS, AND ORPHANS.
6. FORMING STRONG COLLABORATIONS TO UPHOLD GOOD GOVERNANCE – INCLUDING NGOCC'S DECISIVE ROLE IN THE **ANTI-THIRD TERM CAMPAIGN**.

7. ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEWS, INCLUDING THE 2016 AMENDMENT PROCESS.
8. ADVOCATING FOR THE **ANTI-GENDER BASED VIOLENCE ACT**, WHILE RAISING NATIONAL AWARENESS ON GBV, RAPE, AND DEFILEMENT.
9. SECURING RECOGNITION OF **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY AS A PUBLIC HOLIDAY**.
10. LOBBYING FOR GREATER WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP, FROM COMMUNITY TO NATIONAL GOVERNANCE, AND
11. EXPANDING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY COMMEMORATIONS BEYOND LUSAKA TO PROVINCIAL LEVELS, ENSURING INCLUSIVITY.

YET, DESPITE THESE GAINS, THE JOURNEY IS FAR FROM OVER.

TEENAGE PREGNANCIES, CHILD MARRIAGES, AND THE UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP CONTINUE TO CHALLENGE OUR CONSCIENCE.

THE CLIMATE CRISIS HAS FURTHER WORSENERD THE VULNERABILITY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS, THREATENING THEIR LIVELIHOODS AND RESILIENCE.

MADAM VICE PRESIDENT, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,
AS A LEARNING AND ADAPTIVE ORGANISATION, NGOCC IS REPOSITIONING ITSELF FOR THE FUTURE.

GUIDED BY BROAD CONSULTATIONS, WE ARE STRENGTHENING OUR ABILITY TO BUILD ON PAST ACHIEVEMENTS, RESPOND TO PRESENT DEMANDS, AND ANTICIPATE FUTURE CHALLENGES.

IN 2024, WE LAUNCHED THE **“HER TIME IS NOW”** CAMPAIGN TO AMPLIFY WOMEN’S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AHEAD OF THE GENERAL ELECTIONS AND BEYOND.

WE REMAIN RESOLUTE: ZAMBIA NEEDS MORE WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT, IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT, AND IN LEADERSHIP AT EVERY LEVEL.

BUT OUR VISION EXTENDS FURTHER – TO EMPOWER MEN AND BOYS AS ALLIES IN THIS STRUGGLE. BECAUSE GENDER EQUALITY IS NOT A WOMEN’S ISSUE ALONE; IT IS A NATIONAL IMPERATIVE FOR JUSTICE, PROGRESS, AND DIGNITY.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

THIS 40TH ANNIVERSARY IS NOT ONLY A CELEBRATION OF OUR PAST.

IT IS A BOLD DECLARATION OF OUR FUTURE.

WE REAFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO BUILDING A ZAMBIA WHERE EVERY WOMAN AND GIRL CAN THRIVE, LEAD, AND LIVE FREE FROM VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION.

ON BEHALF OF THE NGOCC BOARD, I EXTEND MY HEARTFELT GRATITUDE TO OUR PARTNERS, GOVERNMENT, CIVIL SOCIETY, AND EVERY ZAMBIAN WHO HAS WALKED THIS JOURNEY WITH US.

TOGETHER, LET US CONTINUE TO PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF POSSIBILITY, UNTIL GENDER EQUALITY BECOMES A LIVED REALITY FOR ALL.

LET US NOW BE UPSTANDING AS WE RAISE A TOAST TO **40 YEARS OF NGOCC – A LEGACY OF RESILIENCE, AND A FUTURE OF EQUALITY.**

I THANK YOU.