

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SECURITY – HONOURABLE AUSTIN LIATO, MP – DURING CELEBRATIONS TO MARK THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION AND COMMEMORATE THE WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK

LUSAKA NATIONAL MUSEUM, 28TH APRIL, 2009

THE PRESIDENT, Z.C.T.U.

THE PRESIDENT, Z.F.E.

THE DIRECTOR OF ILO LUSAKA AREA OFFICE

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

IT IS MY PRIVILEGE AND HONOUR TO BE WITH YOU THIS MORNING TO CELEBRATE THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO) AND COMMEMORATE THE WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK.

CHAIRPERSON, TODAY, THE 28TH OF APRIL 2009 MARKS THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE ILO UNDER THE THEME **“ILO – 90 YEARS WORKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE”**. THE ILO WAS FOUNDED IN 1919, IN THE WAKE OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR, TO PURSUE A VISION BASED ON THE PREMISE THAT UNIVERSAL, LASTING PEACE CAN BE ESTABLISHED ONLY IF IT IS BASED UPON DECENT TREATMENT OF WORKING PEOPLE. THE ILO WENT ON TO BE THE FIRST SPECIALIZED AGENCY OF THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) IN 1946, AND ZAMBIA, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, JOINED THE ILO IMMEDIATELY AFTER GAINING HER INDEPENDENCE IN 1964.

THE ILO BELIEVES THAT WORK IS CENTRAL TO PEOPLE'S WELL-BEING AND THAT IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING INCOME, WORK CAN PAVE THE WAY FOR BROADER SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT, STRENGTHENING INDIVIDUALS, THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES. SUCH PROGRESS, HOWEVER, HINGES ON WORK THAT IS DECENT. DECENT WORK, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, SUMS UP THE ASPIRATIONS OF PEOPLE IN THEIR WORKING LIVES.

IN ZAMBIA, THE ILO'S DECENT WORK AGENDA IS CHANNELLED THROUGH THE DECENT WORK COUNTRY PROGRAMME. THE ZAMBIA DECENT WORK COUNTRY PROGRAMME WAS DEVELOPED THROUGH A PROCESS OF INTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH THE ILO'S TRIPARTITE CONSTITUENTS – NAMELY GOVERNMENT, EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS – FROM 2005 TO 2007. THE CONSULTATIONS LED TO THE FOLLOWING ISSUES BEING IDENTIFIED AS PRIORITIES FOR THE ZAMBIA DECENT WORK COUNTRY PROGRAMME:

- (I). MORE AND BETTER EMPLOYMENT FOR THE YOUTH, WOMEN AND PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, SUPPORTED BY ENHANCED LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION (LMI) SYSTEMS;
- (II). RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF HIV AND AIDS IN THE WORLD OF WORK; AND
- (III). ELIMINATING CHILD LABOUR, PARTICULARLY IN ITS WORST FORMS.

CHAIRPERSON, ADDRESSING THE THREE DECENT WORK COUNTRY PROGRAMME PRIORITIES WILL NOT ONLY CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS ZAMBIA'S EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS), BUT WILL ALSO ASSIST TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR MARKET POLICY (NELMP), AND THE ACTIONABLE AREAS OF THE EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR CHAPTER IN THE FIFTH NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (FNDP).

CHAIRPERSON, THE 28TH OF APRIL IS ALSO THE DAY WHEN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY COMMEMORATES THE “WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK”. THE WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK IS AN INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE SAFE, HEALTHY, AND DECENT WORK. THE COMMEMORATION OF THE WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK EMANATES FROM THE WORKERS’ MEMORIAL DAY WHICH STARTED IN NORTH AMERICA IN 1989 TO COMMEMORATE DECEASED AND INJURED WORKERS ANNUALLY ON 28TH APRIL, A DATE WHICH THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS AND GLOBAL UNION FEDERATIONS CONVERTED INTO AN ANNUAL EVENT. IN 2003, THE ILO BEGAN TO OBSERVE THE DAY AS AN OCCASION FOR STRESSING THE PREVENTION OF ILLNESS AND ACCIDENTS AT WORK. THIS EVENT HAS OVER THE YEARS GAINED GLOBAL SIGNIFICANCE AND IS NOW OBSERVED ANNUALLY IN OVER 100 ILO MEMBER STATES INCLUDING ZAMBIA.

CHAIRPERSON, THE THEME FOR THIS YEAR’S COMMEMORATION OF THE WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK IS “**HEALTH AND LIFE AT WORK: A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT**”. IN ITS ENDEAVOUR TO PROMOTE AND SAFEGUARD RIGHTS AT WORK, THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT HAS RATIFIED AND DOMESTICATED THE EIGHT (8) FUNDAMENTAL (CORE) CONVENTIONS OF THE ILO WHICH ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING KEY AREAS IN THE WORLD OF WORK: **CHILD LABOUR; EQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION; FORCED LABOUR; AND FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND THE RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, GOVERNMENT HAS FURTHER PUT IN PLACE LEGISLATION SUCH AS THE FACTORIES ACT, CHAPTER 441 OF THE LAWS OF ZAMBIA, WHICH IS MEANT TO ENHANCE THE RIGHTS OF WORKERS TO A SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKING ENVIRONMENT.

THE ILO ESTIMATES THAT SOME 2.2 MILLION WOMEN AND MEN AROUND THE GLOBE SUCCUMB TO WORK-RELATED ACCIDENTS AND DISEASES EVERY YEAR. WORLD WIDE AROUND 270 MILLION OCCUPATIONAL ACCIDENTS AND 160 MILLION CASES OF WORK-RELATED ILLNESSES OCCUR ANNUALLY. THE ILO FURTHER ESTIMATES THAT 4% OF THE WORLD'S GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT IS LOST THROUGH WORKPLACE INJURY, DEATH AND DISEASE. WORK-RELATED ACCIDENTS AND ILL HEALTH PLACE A TREMENDOUS BURDEN ON WORKERS, THEIR FAMILIES, ENTERPRISES AND THE SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF OCCUPATIONAL ACCIDENTS AND DISEASES IN OUR WORKPLACES IT IS NECESSARY THAT PROPER MANAGEMENT OF RISKS IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT IS INSTITUTED. THIS WILL NOT ONLY REDUCE BOTH THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BURDEN OF WORK-RELATED ACCIDENTS AND DISEASES, BUT WILL FURTHER ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY AND BENEFIT OUR ENTERPRISES AND NATIONAL ECONOMY BY, AMONG OTHER THINGS, LOWERING THE NUMBER OF INSURANCE AND COMPENSATION CLAIMS. CHAIRPERSON, LET ME HASTEN TO ADD THAT THE SUCCESSFUL REALIZATION OF A SAFE AND HEALTHY WORK ENVIRONMENT WILL REQUIRE THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF BOTH EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS THROUGH A SYSTEM OF CLEARLY DEFINED RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES WHERE THE PRINCIPLE OF PREVENTION IS ACCORDED THE HIGHEST PRIORITY.

AS WE COMMEMORATE THIS YEAR'S WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK, WE HAVE TO REMIND OURSELVES THAT EVERY WORK-RELATED DEATH, INJURY OR ILLNESS IS A PREVENTABLE TRAGEDY AND ALSO THAT THE VICTIMS ARE USUALLY WORKERS IN THE PRIME OF THEIR LIVES AND THEIR IMMEDIATE AND EXTENDED FAMILIES OFTEN DEPEND ON THEM FOR LIVELIHOOD. THE DEVASTATION BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE DEATH, INJURY OR ILLNESS OF A WORKER IS USUALLY FURTHER COMPOUNDED AND MAGNIFIED BY THE FACT THAT HIS/HER FAMILY IS LEFT ECONOMICALLY STRANDED AND HAS TO BEAR BOTH THE

LOSS OF THE EARNED INCOME AND THE ADDED COST OF MEDICAL TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION IN THE CASE OF INJURY OR ILLNESS.

CHIRPERSON, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE ILO FOR THE STEADFAST SUPPORT IT HAS RENDERED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA, OVER THE YEARS, IN PROMOTING RIGHTS AT WORK, ENCOURAGING DECENT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, ENHANCING SOCIAL PROTECTION AND STRENGTHENING DIALOGUE IN HANDLING WORK-RELATED ISSUES. FURTHER, ALLOW ME TO COMMEND THE ORGANIZERS FROM MY MINISTRY, ILO, SOCIAL PARTNERS, EXHIBITORS AND OTHER PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS FOR MAKING THIS EXHIBITION A REALITY.

CHAIRPERSON, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I WOULD LIKE, ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA AND ITS PEOPLE, TO CONCLUDE BY CONGRATULATING THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO) ON THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDING.

WITH THESE FEW WORDS, IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO NOW DECLARE THE EXHIBITION MARKING THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO) AND THE 2009 COMMEMORATION OF THE WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK OFFICIALLY OPENED.

I THANK YOU ALL AND MAY GOD BLESS YOU.