



**REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

**SPEECH READ BY THE DISTRICT EDUCATION BOARD
SECRETARY MR. CHARLES MIYOBA ON 27TH MARCH
2024 AT THE ZANEC TRAINING OF MEDIA
PRACTITIONERS IN ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND
EDUCATION**

**HELD AT PANAMA LODGE IN LIVINGSTONE SOUTHERN
PROVINCE**

**REPRESENTATIVES FROM VARIOUS MEDIA HOUSES,
TRANAC PARTNER COUNTRIES PRESENT VIRTUALLY,
ZANEC MEMBER ORGANISATIONS PRESENT,
SOUTHERN PROVINCE ZANEC PROVINCIAL FOCAL
POINT PERSON (PFP),**

MAY I SIMPLY SAY ALL PROTOCOLS OBSERVED

IT IS WITH GREAT HONOUR AND PRIVILEGE TO STAND BEFORE YOU TODAY ON THIS TRAINING FOR MEDIA PRACTITIONERS IN ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND EDUCATION IN GENERAL. TODAY'S WORKSHOP IS HELD UNDER THE THEME "***THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN THE PROMOTION OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND EQUALITY EDUCATION FOR EVERYONE THROUGH REPORTING***". AS MEDIA PRACTITIONERS, WE HAVE TREMENDOUS POWER AND INFLUENCE OVER PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND DISCOURSE. THAT POWER COMES WITH A RESPONSIBILITY TO UPHOLD THE PRINCIPLES OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND EQUAL EDUCATION FOR ALL.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;

AS THE DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE WE ARE PLEASED WITH THIS PROGRESSIVE INITIATIVE TO TRAIN OUR

COLLEAGUES IN MEDIA. MEDIA NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE EDUCATION PLAYS IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. MEDIA SHOULD DISSEMINATE THE RIGHT INFORMATION TO THE PEOPLE IN OUR BELOVED COUNTRY AND THEY CAN ONLY DO THIS WHEN THEY UNDERSTAND THE SECTOR THROUGH TRAINING LIKE THE ONE, WE ARE HAVING TODAY. AS MEDIA YOU HAVE THE MANDATE TO ENCOURAGE THE PUBLIC TO TAKE THEIR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL AS WELL AS PROVIDE CHECKS AND BALANCES TO THE GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE QUALITY AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION FOR ALL.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;

IT IS GOOD THAT TODAY WE WILL BE LEARNING WHAT ACADEMIC FREEDOM IS AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS. INDEED, ACADEMIC FREEDOM IS NOT MERELY A PRIVILEGE; IT IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT THAT UNDERPINS THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE, INNOVATION, SOCIETAL PROGRESSION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

IT IS THE FOUNDATION OF A THRIVING DEMOCRACY AND A BEACON OF HOPE FOR OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS. HOWEVER, ACADEMIC FREEDOM IS UNDER THREAT IN MANY INSTANCES IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING AND OTHER SECTORS AT LARGE, WITH SUPPRESSION AND INTIMIDATION RESTRAINING THE VOICES, IDEALS AND CREATIVITY OF STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS.

AS MEDIA PRACTITIONERS, WE HAVE TO SHINE A LIGHT ON THESE INJUSTICES, TO AMPLIFY THE VOICES OF THOSE WHO ARE SILENCED, AND TO HOLD INSTITUTIONS, DUTY BEARERS AND GOVERNMENTS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS. WE MUST USE OUR PLATFORMS TO TELL THE STORIES OF STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS WHO ARE FIGHTING FOR THEIR RIGHT TO ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND TO CHALLENGE THE SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION THAT SEEK TO SUPPRESS THEM.

AS MEDIA PRACTITIONERS YOU HAVE A DUTY TO FOSTER EDUCATION FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT THROUGH TO PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION TO TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

OUR INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM, WE NEED TO UNCOVER CASES OF SUPPRESSION, INFRINGEMENT ON ACADEMIC AUTONOMY, AND DISCRIMINATION WITHIN THE ACADEMIC SPHERE. MOREOVER, AS JOURNALISTS WE CAN RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND CHALLENGE ATTEMPTS TO UNDERMINE IT, CONSEQUENTLY HELPING TO SAFEGUARD THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF INTELLECTUAL INQUIRY AND EXPRESSION IN ZAMBIA.

FURTHERMORE, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE PURSUIT OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM IS ESSENTIALLY LINKED TO THE QUEST FOR EQUALITY EDUCATION. ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION SHOULD NOT BE A PRIVILEGE RESERVED FOR A FEW INDIVIDUALS, BUT A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT GUARANTEED TO ALL. THROUGH OUR REPORTING, WE HAVE THE CAPACITY TO EXPOSE DISPARITIES IN EDUCATIONAL ACCESS, ADVOCATE FOR INCLUSIVE POLICIES, AND ELEVATE THE STORIES OF MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES WHO FACE BARRIERS TO EQUALITY EDUCATION AS IT IS A DRIVER FOR NATIONAL AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

I ALSO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK THE PARTNERS OF ZANEC, NORWEGIAN STUDENTS' AND ACADEMIC INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FUND (SAIH) FOR MAKING FUNDS AVAILABLE TO HOLD THIS NOBLE TRAINING. WE FURTHER APPLAUD THEM FOR THE FUNDS THEY HAVE PROVIDED TO ADVOCATE FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN THE COUNTRY AND FOR EMPOWERING THE MEDIA THROUGH THE MEDIA AWARDS ZANEC HAS BEEN HOLDING SINCE 2014. INDEED, GOVERNMENT IS PROUD OF ZANEC FOR COMPLEMENTING ITS EFFORTS IN THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS SECTOR BY PROVIDING EVIDENCE-BASED ADVOCACY.

IN CLOSING, LET US REMEMBER THAT THE FIGHT FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM, EQUALITY AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION IS EVERYONE'S OBLIGATION AND A MORAL IMPERATIVE. AS MEDIA PRACTITIONERS, WE HAVE THE POWER TO SHAPE HEARTS AND MINDS, TO INSPIRE ACTION AND CHANGE. LET US USE THAT POWER WISELY AND WITH COMPASSION, KNOWING THAT THE FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY DEPENDS ON IT.

I NOW OFFICIALLY OPEN THIS TRAINING.

I THANK YOU AND MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL.