



Republic of Zambia  
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Services

**STATEMENT BY HON. DORA SILIYA, MP, MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING SERVICES AND CHIEF GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON TO LAUNCH THE 2020 WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY ON ZNBC TELEVISION TO BE BROADCAST ON SATURDAY, 2<sup>ND</sup> MAY, 2020, AFTER THE 19:00HRS MAIN NEWS**

## **Countrymen and women,**

On Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2020, Zambia joins the global community in commemorating the World Press Freedom Day under the theme “**Journalism without fear or favour.**”

Observed annually, World Press Freedom Day raises global awareness on the role and importance of the media in the development and wellbeing of humanity. The day has its roots in the United Nations Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights which espouses freedom of opinion and expression as an inalienable right.

This year's World Press Freedom Day will be celebrated differently than other years. The year 2020 shepherded in with the COVID-19 challenge, a worldwide pandemic, has in a great part changed and transformed things differently than what it is known to be the norm.

Dreadfully so, the media in Zambia like in other countries in the world, will celebrate the 2020 World Press Freedom Day under a dark cloud when the nation and the international community is battling the coronavirus pandemic.

His Excellency President Edgar Changwa announced during his first national address on Covid – 19 on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, among other things, the prohibition of gatherings of more than 50 people and government's cancelation of all planned celebrations for national public holidays which includes commemoration of the 2020 World Press Freedom Day.

Since the President's pronouncements, things have transformed for business unusual. This also affected the way national days were going to be celebrated and commemorated. The norm as it was known has to be altered. A need to do things differently has arisen and thus too, how national days as they were done before are challenged.

As such, the Commemoration of this year's World Press Freedom Day will be done in the form of online debates as well as television and radio discussion programmes. This decision has been taken to minimise risks of contracting coronavirus for all involved.

## **Countrymen and women,**

This year's theme, “**Journalism without fear or favour,**” espouses the tenets of boldness, courage and determination that the media should possess in every situation.

In this regard, the media is expected to be an agent of positive change on society through its role of informing, educating and entertaining the public. The media is also expected to be adaptive, innovative, inclusive and above all patriotic, in building a Zambia we want for ourselves, our children and generations to come.

To achieve this, the media is urged to aspire for the highest level of ethical and professional standards in their reportorial work. The media's loyalty should be to the truth and to the people of Zambia and not to individuals and their narrow personal interests.

As we grapple with the corona virus pandemic, the media is the most important player in giving people accurate and educational information to stop the spread of the virus. The media has a big responsibility to put into context what corona virus means in terms of the sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, labour, tourism, manufacturing and mining, to mention but these. Without the media, the fight against the corona virus cannot be won by the greatest medics or Governments.

On behalf of Government, I take this opportunity, to commend the media for playing such a critical role in sensitising the public about the corona virus. Media houses have continuously supported Government during the daily coronavirus updates led by the ministries of Health and Information.

Over the years, the media has been operating under difficult conditions in bringing out information through both electronic and print platforms to various categories of people for them to make informed decisions. The situation has become even more difficult with the outbreak of Covid 19. The media as a business now needs to start thinking how they are going to cope in the midst of the coronavirus.

### **Countrymen and women,**

For its part, Government wants to see Journalists protected from both Government and media owners as well as see a media which operates in a conducive environment. Government further wants to see a professional media which upholds their ethics. As much as the media is required to be without fear or favour, they are expected to practice their skills with due respect for the rights of those they cover. Our goal is for us to have media houses that will not write and publish or broadcast stories in favour of certain interests with impunity and disregard for the rights of others.

It is an indisputable fact that the media can do more to report on various key issues away from politics. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) have a lot of indicators and benchmarks that the media can cover. The media should also support Government by bringing out issues that we need to address. The media can vigorously expose child marriage, tribalism, political and gender based violence, among other issues.

Government is alive to the fact that the media across the country drafted and presented to Government, the Zambia Media Council (ZAMEC) bill, a bill which is supposed to set standards for all Journalists in the country to report accurately, objectively and fairly.

Which is why I take this opportunity to re-iterate Government's unwavering commitment to creating a conducive environment for the media to flourish by ensuring that the ZAMEC Bill is enacted sooner than later.

Government through my Ministry, has also formulated the Media Development Policy and the National Information Communication Policy to guide the continued growth of the country's media industry.

These and other measures represent Government's desire and determination to enhance the free flow and public access to information, a pre-requisite for achieving sustainable social and economic development.

### **Countrymen and Women,**

Several online and studio activities have been arranged to commemorate this year's World Press Freedom Day.

They include the following, among others:

- Online discussion programmes,
- A visit to selected media houses to sensitise Journalists on Covid 19,
- Television and radio discussion programmes.

I take this opportunity to invite all media practitioners, stakeholders and the general public to participate in the activities lined up to commemorate this year's World Press Freedom Day.

### **Country men and Women,**

I wish the media well as we commemorate this day and invite the MLC to continuously engage with my office and institutions like the IBA for us to

safeguard the interests of all media houses for them to serve the Zambian interests in a transparent, accountable and responsible manner.

I wish to end by re-affirming Government's commitment to a free, independent and professional media in deepening our democracy and development.

It is now my honour and privilege to declare this year's World Press Freedom Day officially launched.

Goodnight and God bless Zambia.