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STATEMENT BY

**THE RIGHT HONOURABLE MS NELLY B K MUTTI, SC, MP, FAPRA,
SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA**

DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE ON THE TOPIC:

**HARNESSING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION (STI)
FOR A MORE PEACEFUL AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

PREPARED FOR:

**THE GENERAL DEBATE ON THE 149TH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY
UNION (IPU) ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS TO BE HELD IN
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND, FROM 13TH TO 17TH OCTOBER, 2024**

OCTOBER, 2024

Madam President;

I am honoured to be accorded this opportunity to share my thoughts on the topic "***harnessing Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for a more peaceful and sustainable future.***"

This year's Assembly coincides with the commemoration of 100 years of the National Assembly of Zambia's existence. I have since declared that starting next year, ***23rd May***, will be observed annually as "***Parliament Day***" in Zambia. In addition, for the first time in the history of our parliament, the 2025 National Budget is being scrutinised through sector Committees, a big Reform in the history of our Parliament which undoubtedly will enhance financing, among other tangible outcomes, towards Research and Development, of which science, technology and innovation are an integral component.

Madam President;

The Month of October remains dear to our country. In a few days' time, Zambia will be celebrating 60 years of our independence with impeccable democratic credentials of being the peace haven of Southern Africa with a record of peaceful hand over of power by 7 presidents and 4 political parties.

Madam President;

The contribution of STI to a more peaceful and sustainable future is well acknowledged globally. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure speaks to fostering innovation and technological progress for promoting inclusive and sustainable industrial development. Similarly, Article 27 of the United Nations Declaration for Human Rights affirms everyone's rights to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Madam President;

The adoption of a new ***Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology***, by the Governing Council of the IPU aimed at creating a regulatory framework of principles to guide legislation and decision-making that will ensure that science and technology especially in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI), will be impactful on humanity, society and the environment.

Madam President;

The theme for the 149th Assembly could not have come at better time than now, especially that Zambia is going through a very challenging period. This is in view of the severe drought we have experienced caused by El Niño weather conditions. The drought has had devastating consequences on many critical sectors such as

agriculture, water, and energy, risking 84 out of 116 districts accounting for over 6 million of our people.

Amidst this challenge, I am happy to inform you that the Government of the Republic of Zambia has harnessed Science, Technology, and Innovation to mitigate against the impact of the drought. These include early maturing, disease and pest tolerant, high yielding and climate smart seed varieties, water harvesting technologies and high-tech irrigation models. Suffice to mention that, in the energy sector our Government has introduced what is called Net Metering System, which allow customers who produce their own electricity to feed excess electricity generated into the national grid.

Madam President;

In its effort to advance the harnessing of STI, the Parliament of Zambia has enacted various legislation that governs the STI Sector meant to build a more peaceful and sustainable Zambia. Further, the Parliament of Zambia, as part of the budget approval function, allocates resources to STI, through the ***Strategic Research Fund*** and ***the Science, Technology, and Innovation Youth Fund***. These funds are aimed at enhancing research as well as encouraging youths and women to develop scientific and/or technological

innovations, with specific focus on innovations that are relevant to the creation of wealth and employment sustainably.

Madam President; to demonstrate its commitment in harnessing STI, the Parliament of Zambia was among the few Legislatures in the region who continued to conduct its Parliamentary Business amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic. This was made possible through the use of the e-Chamber system that managed the plenary as well as the Committee Sittings. The system among others is used to generate attendance list, Speaker's list where MPs who wish to speak on a matter are captured, provision for raising points of order and facilitating electronic voting.

In addition, our Parliament in collaboration with Smart Zambia Institute, has installed Starlink internet devices to all the 156 Constituencies. This has enabled the Constituents to communicate effectively with their MPs on important matters such as the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), eliminating the need for physical travel to address a matter that can be resolved in good time using the Starlink device.

CONCLUSION

Madam President; as highlighted in our overarching theme of the 149th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) General Assembly, it is

incumbent upon us all as parliamentarians to play a crucial role in ensuring that we harness Science, Technology, and Innovation whilst at the same time mitigating the risks associated with new technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI).

I thank you for your attention.
