



## **SPEECH**

**SPEECH BY THE REGISTRAR OF THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY**

**MR LACKSON TONGA**

**DURING THE RISK ASSESSEMENT TRAINING WORKSHOP**

**AT CRESTA GOLFVIEW HOTEL, LUSAKA.**

**4<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 2018.**

SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS PRESENT

THE COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION, MR. GEORGE OKECH

FACILITATORS OF THE WORKSHOP NAMELY, DR. MASAMI TAKEUCHI FROM THAILAND, DR. BERT POPPING FROM GERMANY AND DR. HELLEN KAJUJU FROM KENYA

THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY

STAKEHOLDERS IN BIOTECHNOLOGY AND BIOSAFETY

NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY STAFF

INVITED GUESTS

THE MEDIA

DISTINUGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

**GOOD MORNING,**

I WELCOME YOU ALL TO THIS WORKSHOP AND TO JUST SAY THAT TODAY IS YET ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT DAY FOR THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY.

IT IS A SIGNIFICANT DAY BECAUSE WE ARE PLEASED TO HOST THIS FIRST RISK ASSESSEMENT WORKSHOP FOR SOME KEY STAKEHOLDERS – THE WORKSHOP WHICH COULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE TO HOLD WITHOUT THE PARTNERSHIP WITH FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION WHO WE HAVE CO- FUNDED THIS EVENT WITH.

WE ARE HAPPY WITH THIS COLLABORATION AND WE THANK THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION FOR THE GESTURE.

AT THE SAME TIME, WE WOULD LIKE TO CALL UPON MANY OTHER ORGANISATIONS TO PARTNER WITH US AS WE ENDEVOUR TO ACHIEVE OUR MANDATE.

WE ALSO RECOGNISE AND THANK THE FACILITATORS WHO HAVE COME FROM GERMANY, KENYA AND THAILAND TO SHARE IDEAS WITH US, AS THEY TOO ARE KEY TO THIS WORKSHOP.

**INVITED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

YOU MAY RECALL ZAMBIA IS PARTY TO INTERNATIONAL PROTOCOLS THAT SUPPORT BIOSAFETY IN MORDERN BIOTECHNOLOGY. FOR EXAMPLE THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY IS CRITICAL FOR US AS IT HELPS US COMPLY WITH THE COMMITMENTS STATED THEREIN. THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL ON BIOSAFETY IS AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT WHICH AIMS

TO ENSURE THE SAFE HANDLING, TRANSPORT AND USE OF LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS RESULTING FROM MODERN BIOTECHNOLOGY THAT MAY HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT RISKS TO HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH AS WELL AS THE ENVIRONMENT.

WE ARE HAPPY THAT IN FURTHERANCE OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE CARTAGENA PROTOCOL, THE KUALA LUMPUR SUPPLEMENTARY PROTOCOL ON LIABILITY AND REDRESS HAS COME INTO EFFECT. IT IS OUR HOPE THAT WE WILL SOON BE PARTY TO THIS IMPORTANT SUPPLEMENTARY PROTOCOL WHICH AIMS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIODIVERSITY BY PROVIDING INTERNATIONAL RULES AND PROCEDURES IN THE FIELD OF LIABILITY AND REDRESS RELATING TO LIVING MODIFIED ORGANISMS .

THE SUPPLEMENTARY PROTOCOL PROVIDES A DEFINITION OF 'DAMAGE', REFERRING TO AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY THAT IS MEASURABLE OR OTHERWISE OBSERVABLE AND SIGNIFICANT, TAKING ALSO INTO ACCOUNT RISKS TO HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH.

**INVITED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

ACCORDINGLY, THIS THREE- DAY WORKSHOP IS IMPORTANT AS IT FOCUSES ON FOOD SAFETY ASSESSMENT OF PRODUCTS OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISM. THE AIM OF THIS TRAINING IS TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL CAPACITIES AND ENHANCE REGIONAL BIOSAFETY REGULATORY SYSTEMS AND DECISION MAKING PROCESSES.

IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT WILL HELP THE PARTICIPANTS UNDERSTAND BETTER THE APPLICATION OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD SAFETY ASSESSMENTS.

AS YOU MAY BE AWARE OUR MANDATE IS TO REGULATE THE RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, APPLICATION, IMPORTATION, EXPORT, TRANSIT, CONTAINED USE, RELEASE OR PLACING ON THE MARKET OF ANY GMO WHETHER INTENDED FOR USE AS A PHARMACEUTICAL, FOOD, FEED OR PROCESSING, OR A PRODUCT OF A GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS.

THIS MANDATE IS MAINLY THERE TO ENSURE THAT ANY ACTIVITY INVOLVING THE USE OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS OR A PRODUCT OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS PREVENTS ANY SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OR HARM TO HUMAN, ANIMAL HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE COUNTRY. AS SUCH RISK ASSESSMENT IS FUNDAMENTAL IN MEETING OUR MANDATE.

HOWEVER, WHILE OUR AIM IS TO ENSURE THAT THE PRODUCTS THAT CONTAIN GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS WHICH ARE PLACED ON THE MARKET ARE SAFE AND THERE IS NO RISK TO THE PEOPLE, ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT, AS THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY WE ARE COGNISANT OF THE FACT THAT OUR MANDATE HAS BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD ON MANY OCCASSIONS.

FOR EXAMPLE, IT HAS TO BE KNOWN THAT WE ARE NOT PROMOTERS NOR PROHIBITERS OF ANY GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISM. BUT AS ALREADY ALLUDED TO ABOVE THROUGH OUR MANDATE, WE REGULATE ALL MATTERS RELATING TO GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS.

THIS IS TO SAY THAT WHILE IT IS IMPORTANT TO SAFEGUARD THE SAFETY IN TERMS OF HUMAN AND ANIMAL LIFE AS WELL AS THE ENVIRONMENT, WE ALSO WANT TO ENSURE THAT BENEFITS OF MODERN BIOTECHNOLOGY FOR END USERS, PRODUCERS, CONSUMERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC ARE GUARANTEED.

**INVITED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,**

IT MAY PLEASE YOU TO KNOW THAT WE DO RECEIVE APPLICATIONS EITHER FOR IMPORT, USE, RESEARCH OR RELEASE OF A GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS PRODUCT WHICH WE SUBJECT TO DETAILED RISK ASSESSMENT BY A TEAM OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED SCIENTISTS BEFORE WE MAKE ANY DECISION WHETHER TO ALLOW OR TO DENY THE PERMISSION ON THE PARTICULAR REQUEST.

ACCORDING TO THE LEGAL PROVISIONS, RISK ASSESSMENT IS A PROCESS IN WHICH THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE UNDERTAKES A SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL REVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL INVOLVING THE GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISM TO DETERMINE THAT THE PROPOSED ACTIVITY WILL NOT POSE ANY RISK TO HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH AS WELL THE ENVIRONMENT IN ZAMBIA.

THEREFORE, WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT THIS RISK ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP WILL ENHANCE THE AUTHORITY'S CAPACITY TO CONDUCT EFFECTIVE REGULATION OF SAFE APPLICATION AND USE OF MODERN BIOTECHNOLOGY AS IT RELATES TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE BIOSAFETY ACT NUMBER TEN OF TWO THOUSAND AND SEVEN.

**IN CONCLUSION,**

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE FOR THE CONTINUED SUPPORT, AND THE FACILITATORS FOR THEIR AVAILABILITY DURING THIS WORKSHOP.

FURTHERMORE, WE WISH TO ENCOURAGE THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE CONTINUE THE SERVICE OF RISK ASSESSMENT WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN SET UP FOR IN ORDER TO ADDRESS THE RISKS THAT MAY BE POSED BY GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS TO HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH AND TO THE ENVIRONMENT.

I THANK YOU!