



SPEECH MADE BY

MR LACKSON TONGA

REGISTRAR

NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY

**DURING THE SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN
NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY AND THE
MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

HELD AT MINISTRY OF HEALTH, LUSAKA - ZAMBIA

10 OCTOBER, 2018.

THE PERMANENT SECRETARY
DIRECTORS AND OFFICIALS FROM THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH
STAKEHOLDERS IN BIOTECHNOLOGY AND BIOSAFETY
INVITED GUESTS
THE MEDIA
DISTINUGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

GOOD AFTERNOON,

AS THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY, WE ARE PLEASED TO WELCOME YOU ALL TO THIS SIGNING CEREMONY OF THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN OURSELVES AND THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH FOR ALLOWING US TO COOPERATE IN THE AREA OF PUBLIC HEALTH, SPECIFICALLY AS IT RELATES TO BIOSAFETY ON GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS. THIS COOPERATION HAS COME TO FRUITION TODAY AFTER A LOT OF CONSULTATIONS AND REFINING OF MODALITIES FOR EFFECTIVE ATTAINMENT OF OUR INTENDED GOAL OF MAINTANING GOOD HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH AS WELL AS ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.

PERMANENT SECRETARY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

THE NATION MAY BE AWARE THAT THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY IS A REGULATORY BODY MANDATED TO ENSURE SAFETY OF HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH AS WELL AS PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMNET BY REGULATING RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT, APPLICATION, IMPORT, EXPORT, TRANSIT, CONTAINED USE, RELEASE OR PLACING IN THE MARKET OF

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS WHETHER INTENDED FOR USE AS A PHARMACEUTICAL, FOOD, FEED OR PROCESSING, OR A PRODUCT OF A GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISM. IT IS OUR JOB TO MAKE SURE THAT ANY ACTIVITY INVOLVING THE USE OF ANY GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS OR A PRODUCT OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISM PREVENTS ANY SOCIAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OR HARM TO HUMAN AND ANIMAL HEALTH, OR ANY DAMAGE TO THE ENVIRONMENT, NON- GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROP OR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY.

SIMILARLY, ONE OF THE MANDATES OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH IS TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC AGAINST HEALTH HAZARDS FROM FOOD, DRUGS AND COSMECTICS AS WELL AS THE ENFORCING OF PROVISIONS OF THE RELEVANT LAWS.

THEREFORE, THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING IS AIMED AT CREATING SYNERGIES IN PROMOTING GOOD HEALTH AND PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT FROM DEGRADATION. SPECIFICALLY, WE ANTICIPATE THAT THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WILL FURTHER HELP IN IMPROVING OUR REGULATORY FUNCTION IN ENSURING THAT ALL GENETICALLY MODIFIED PRODUCTS COMING IN THE COUNTRY, UNDERGO RISK ASSESSMENT AND ARE ACCOMPANIED WITH A PERMIT FROM THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY. THE PRODUCTS NEED TO UNDERGO THE RISK ASSESSMENT WHICH IS CONDUCTED BY THE SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN ORDER TO ASCERTAIN SAFETY OF SUCH GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS AND PRODUCTS.

FOR THOSE INTENDING TO EXPORT THEIR PRODUCE, THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY ALSO PROVIDES A SERVICE OF THE CERTIFYING ANY PRODUCT AS FREE OF GENETIC MODIFICATION.

IN IMPLEMENTING THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING, THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY WILL BE PROVIDED WITH PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTORS BY THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH, AND THE INSPECTORS BEING REFERRED TO HERE ARE THOSE LOCATED AT SELECTED PORTS OF ENTRY.

THE INSPECTORS WHO WILL BE APPOINTED FOR THIS UNDERTAKING WILL BE TRAINED ON THE PROVISIONS OF THE BIOSAFETY ACT IN ORDER TO EQUIP THEM WITH THE NECESSARY TOOLS AND EXPERTISE REQUIRED FOR CARRYING OUT INSPECTIONS ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY. FOR EXAMPLE, THE APPOINTED INSPECTORS AT THE PORTS OF ENTRY WILL BE PROVIDED WITH A LIST OF ALLOWED PRODUCTS CONTAINING GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS AND ALSO A LIST OF ALL DISTRIBUTORS AND IMPORTERS THAT HAVE BEEN GIVEN PERMITS TO IMPORT SUCH PRODUCTS.

PERMANENT SECRETARY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

MAY I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO INFORM THE NATION THAT ZAMBIA HAS MADE A NUMBER OF STRIDES IN REGULATING GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS RESULTING FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY THROUGH THE BIOSAFETY ACT NO. 10 OF 2007. PRIOR TO THE LEGISLATION OF THAT ACT, THE COUNTRY HAD LIMITED CAPACITY TO MONITOR AND REGULATE GENETICALLY MODIFIED

ORGANISMS. BESIDES THIS LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK, SOME OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS ZAMBIA HAS MADE INCLUDE HUMAN CAPITAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FOR DETECTION OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS. HOWEVER, LET ME HASTEN TO SAY THE HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED AT THE SAME PACE AS WAS WITH INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT.

FOR THIS REASON, WE CONTINUE TO CALL ON HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS TO FILL THIS GAP BY INCREASING TRAINING ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE DISCIPLINES OF GENETIC ENGINEERING INORDER TO PROVIDE THE NATION WITH MORE PERSONNEL WITH AN UNDERSTANIDNG OF THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT.

HAVING SAID THIS, IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY IS A REGULATORY AUTHORITY THAT DOES NOT HINDER NOR PROMOTE GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS BUT REGULATES THE APPLICATION, CONTAINED USE, DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH IN A JUDICIOUS WAY.

PERMANENT SECRETARY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

MAY I MAKE MENTION HERE THAT WE CURRENTLY HAVE NOT GIVEN A PERMIT FOR ANY GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS, SEEDS OR ANIMAL AS THERE IS LIMITED RESEARCH IN THE COUNTRY ON THAT. HOWEVER, WHO EVER WANTS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON THESE ASPECTS IS FREE TO COME FORTH AND SUBMIT THEIR APPLICATION FOR CONSIDERATION. IN THE SAME VEIN, ALLOW ME TO STATE THAT THERE IS A LOT OF MISINFORMATION CIRCULATING IN SOME QUARTERS, ESPECIALLY ON

SOCIAL MEDIA, WHERE SOME INDIVIDUALS ARE CLAIMING THAT SOME CHICKENS THAT ARE BEINGSOLD ON THE MARKET ARE GENETICALLY MODIFIED YET THEY ARE NOT. FROM WHERE WE ARE SITTING AS NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY, WE HAVE NOT HANDLED ANY APPLICATION OF THAT NATURE IN RELATION TO GENETICALLY MODIFIED CHICKENS. WE, HOWEVER, HAVE COME TO A CONCLUSION THAT CURRENTLY TO A LAYMAN, ANYTHING THAT IS BIG IS A GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISM. WE WISH TO URGE THOSE THAT HAVE ACCESS TO THE INTERNET TO SEARCH ON THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING HOUSE, AN ONLINE LINK UNDER UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND WHICH GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS ARE OUT THERE AT A GLOBAL SCALE.

INVITED GUESTS LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

AS THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY, OUR FIRST PRIORITY IS THE SAFETY OF HUMANS, ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENT. THEREFORE, THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING IS VERY CRITICAL TO US. IT WILL STRENGTHEN THE MONITORING OF THE PRODUCTS THAT ARE MADE FROM GMOS ENTERING THE COUNTRY.

WE THEREFORE, URGE THE INSPECTORS AT THE PORTS OF ENTRY AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC TO REPORT TO US OR OTHER RELEVANT AUTHORITIES ANY PRODUCTS THEY SUSPECT MAY CONTAIN GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS WHICH MAY NOT BE ON THE LIST AND ARE BROUGHT IN BY SOMEONE WHO HAS NOT BEEN ISSUED WITH A PERMIT.

ACCORDINGLY, THE INSPECTORS AT PORTS OF ENTRY ARE ALLOWED TO DETAIN ANY PRODUCTS THEY SUSPECT MAY CONTAIN GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS UNTIL SUCH PRODUCTS ARE SUBJECTED TO LABORATORY TESTS AND AN APPROPRIATE RISK ASSESSMENT.

INVITED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

FURTHERMORE, ALLOW ME TO REITERATE OUR WARNING TO ALL THOSE DEALING IN PRODUCTS THAT ARE MADE FROM GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS TO ENSURE THAT THEY OBTAIN PERMITS OTHERWISE THE LAW WILL VISIT THEM. APART FROM CONFISCATING SUCH PRODUCTS IF BROUGHT IN ILLEGALLY, THE DISTRIBUTORS OR SUPPLIERS FOUND WANTING WILL ALSO BE CHARGED ACCORDING TO THE LAW.

LAST BUT NOT THE LEAST WE WANT TO ASSURE THE PUBLIC THAT THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY AUTHORITY IS ALERT AND DOING EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF HUMANS, ANIMALS AND THE ENVIRONMENTS BY PUTTING IN MEASURES FOR MONITORING AND SUVEILLANCE AS EVIDENCED BY THIS MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WE ARE SIGNING TODAY.

I THANK YOU ALL.

