

WELCOME REMARKS

“All protocols observed”.

I am greatly honored to welcome to the 5th Zambian Women in Engineering Section (ZWES) Conference, our Guest of Honour who is the Permanent Secretary Technical Ministry of Energy, Senior Eng. Himba Cheelo. I also wish to welcome the President of the SAFEO Eng. Linda Moseki, the President of the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) Eng. Pr. Refilwe Buthelezi, the President of the Association of Professional Women Engineers of Nigeria (APWEN) Engr. Dr. Elizabeth Jumoke Eterigho, the Vice President Africa for the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World, Prof. Olubukola Oluranti Babalola, other international delegates, international and local panelists, the EIZ President Eng. Abel Ng'andu and Councilors, All Past EIZ Presidents and Vice Presidents present, the Zambian Women in Engineering, not forgetting our forever allies, the Men in Engineering as well as everyone in attendance. Let me also let our international delegates know that Livingstone, the town we are meeting, is Zambia's tourist capital. It is home to the Victoria Falls, one of seven natural wonders of the world which is a shared treasure with

Zimbabwe, and I emphasize, don't leave Livingstone without seeing this wonder. I also wish to inform you that Zambia is known for its hospitality, and I believe you already have had a taste of this hospitality so please take a walk around Livingstone.

Guest of Honour, our conference this year is being held under the theme "Job Creation through Home Grown Engineering Solutions; The Perspective of Women in Engineering". Allow me to start by stating that when God created man, he put him in the garden to work it and keep it (Gen 2:15) and I therefore suppose we find purpose in work. And so the conversations we will have today, seek to challenge or help us as women in engineering, participate in job creation in the nation. They will enlighten us to opportunities available in both the public and private sector that we could exploit and contribute to creating jobs. Guest of Honor, we realize that jobs have always been at the heart of economic development policies in Zambia. This is evident by having prioritized job creation in our long-term vision; the Vision 2030, which seeks to help Zambia attain middle-income status by 2030, with economic transformation and job creation, as one of the four strategic areas of intervention to achieving this end. As such, successive Governments have

recognized the role of jobs in making Zambia a more equal middle-income country.

In the Seventh National Development Plan (2017 to 2021), and under the National Strategy for Job Creation and Industrialization, government had set out to create one million jobs in those 5 years through economic diversification. The plan sort, to create waged jobs in non-mining sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism which was however not achieved. Under the current Eighth National Development Plan (2022 to 2026), Economic Transformation and Job Creation is still one of the four key strategic interventions to lead to “Socio-Economic Transformation for Improved Livelihoods”, in the medium term, and to “A Prosperous Middle-Income Nation by 2030”, in the long term. We note that President Hakainde Hichilema through the 8NDP has committed to creating two million jobs by 2026, which is double what was expected with implementation of the 7NDP. This sounds ambitious but is absolutely necessary. The 8NDP seeks to improve living standards, as well as reduce poverty and inequality by creating conditions for strong and inclusive growth. This is anchored on Economic Transformation and Job Creation through implementation of interventions to enhance production and productivity in the agriculture,

tourism, mining and manufacturing sectors, to which engineering input is key.

To put this discussion into context of “Why the Perspective of Women in Engineering”, allow me to refer to the job status in Zambia. I will quote findings in the Gender Status Report of 2017-2019 and of particular interest are two indicators. The first one is the employment-to-population ratio which provides information on the ability of an economy to create employment. A high ratio indicates economic development which in turn leads to economic growth, improved quality of life and well-being but also to reduced poverty-related crimes (or “petty crimes”).

This report revealed that in 2019 the employment-to-population ratio declined to 30.9 per cent from 32.8 per cent in 2017. A performance comparison with the previous Gender Status Report showed that the employment-to-population ratio had significantly reduced by 41 percentage points (from 71.1 per cent in 2016 to 30.9 per cent in 2019). Further the ratio had proportionately reduced between sexes too; from 73.1 per cent in 2016 to 23.2 per cent in 2019 for women and from 70.6 per cent in 2016 to 39.4 per cent in 2019 for men. The report noted that there had been greater

absorption of men than women during the period 2017 to 2019, which it attributed to possible continued bias or stereotyping of women in the labour market. The report highlighted that because of this, there was under-representation of women which had directly impacted national development.

The second indicator is Unemployment Rate which is a *measure of* labour underutilization. It is the proportion of persons in the labour force without employment, but actively searching and available to take up employment. The Gender Status Report 2017-2019 report noted that the unemployment rate declined from 12.6 per cent in 2017 to 11.4 per cent in 2018. However, in 2019, the rate increased to 12.5 per cent. It also reported that in 2019, there were more men (70 per cent) than women (30 per cent) employed formally, which implies that more women than men are vulnerable to employment shocks in Zambia. It is also worth noting that in all these years, the unemployment rate was higher for females than males and this gap could be wider in engineering being male dominated. But women participation is important, because women and girls constitute more than half of Zambia's population and so remain a critical yet untapped resource.

Guest of Honour, it is for these reason that women participation must be prioritized in other job creation initiatives if gender disparity is be addressed. Further, against the higher target of two (2) million jobs by 2026 and poorly performing employment indicators, it is imperative to increase efforts towards job creation. We are aware of government's resolve and commitment to improving women's active participation in both the public and private sectors. We take cognizance of initiatives to improve women's economic status that have been developed such as implementation of gender policies in organisations to address inequalities in the work place but also implementation of women empowerment programmes among others. We also note the deliberate action by government to promote entrepreneurship which in itself promotes economic growth and could help address gender disparity in jobs as most women are not in formal employment. We wish to commend and recognise the importance that the UPND government has placed on entrepreneurship through creation of the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises Development. Some of our members have responded and we will gain insights into their entrepreneurial journey thus far as they share their experiences during this conference. We will also be informed about the different initiatives and policy guidelines for women empowerment programmes from which women have benefitted, even in the engineering

sector such as road construction. We will also learn about other initiatives are available to facilitate participation in women in empowerment programs.

Guest of Honour, I will be quick to say that despite the good intentions behind these initiatives, an issue that concerns the EIZ is sometimes the poor execution of engineering projects resulting in poor quality works. If government is to get value for money, these projects need to be well executed; within time, at the right cost and must be of good quality. Poor execution is not only costly but erodes the value and presumed benefits attached to such projects as the intended results never get achieved. As an institution, we are willing to engage government with proposals on how to address this, through provision of expert advice and guidance for these empowerment funds by providing consultancy services as well as skills transfer.

During this conference, we shall also have a presentation on the importance of partnerships in achieving Sustainable Development Goal No.5 “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. As we are aware, partnerships present an opportunity to spur growth even for businesses and so are critical for job creation. It is said that “two heads (or more) are better

than one”. This is because partnerships leverage on resources such as finances, knowledge, networks etc., and could also help spread the business risks.

Guest of Honour, during this conference, we are showcasing two of our student projects from the 2022 International Women in Engineering Day (INWED) which falls on 23rd June and was held under the theme #ImagineTheFuture. The day celebrated Inventors and Innovators who also shared their inspirational, real-life engineering stories. The first project is an Electrical /Solar powered wheel chair model, which is meant to address challenges in mobility for the physically challenged. This project offers additional benefits to a traditional wheel chair by powering it thus further easing movements. The second is the TIYA CARE device, a hypertension management device. Hypertension (high or raised blood pressure), a very common Non-Communicable Disease, is a condition in which the blood vessels have persistently raised pressure, putting patients under increased stress. The higher the pressure, the harder the heart has to pump, the higher the risk of damage to the heart and blood vessels in other major organs such as the brain and kidneys. According to the WHO, Hypertension is the most important preventable cause of heart disease and stroke worldwide and this

device is one of the conceived prevention devices. Guest of Honour, with support, these projects could be scaled up as they address real life challenges but more importantly could contribute to creation of the much needed 2 million jobs by 2026 envisioned by the 8NDP. In conclusion, with these discussions and presentations, it is my hope that we will enjoy the conference but also be challenged enough, to find a way to contribute to job creation.

In ending, ordinarily this would not have been part of my welcome remarks but I am rather seizing this opportunity to bid farewell as I come to the end of my assignment or work as Chairperson ZWES. This AGM, I will pass on the baton to the new Chairperson Eng. Agness Mofya Mwansa who until now served as Vice Chairperson. In 2010, some women came together to see how we could enhance the participation of women in decision making in our profession and we walked this road until 30th January 2016, when ZWES was birthed. As I looked not only at the high table this morning but also note the composition of various committees in EIZ including management at Secretariat, my heart is full because women have stepped up to participate in decision making. And today we will recognise those who have broken some barriers. This truly feels satisfying to have served as Chairperson and

I therefore, sincerely thank all the women in engineering for entrusting me with the privilege. To the different Presidents and their respective councils that have supported ZWES since 2016 (PP Chiwala, PP Matamwandi, IPP Hanzele and the current President Eng. Ngandu), thank you. To our able Secretariat, thank you for putting up with my demands, and I must admit now that they were sometimes unreasonable but we had to get the job done. To those before me, a quote by Sir Isaac Newton says, “If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants” and these are, firstly, the two Chairpersons that served before me; Eng. Col Lillian Muwina and Eng. Taperewa Namwinga Kabwe and their respective executives which I was part of, and secondly, all those I drew wisdom and guidance from for whatever we achieved, it was because of you and I am indebted. To the new executive, I wish you nothing but the best as you take ZWES to higher heights and I remain at your service.

With these remarks, I now call upon the President of the Engineering Institution of Zambia Eng. Abel Ng’andu to deliver his speech, Mr. President.