



November 19, 2013

**MINISTER RECEIVES ACCESS TO INFORMATION ADVOCATES AND RENEWS
GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TOWARDS ENACTING AN ACCESS TO
INFORMATION LAW IN ZAMBIA**

On 18th November 2013, resolutions formulated at the ACTION (Access to Information)-Zambia regional conference, held in Lusaka this year, were handed over to the Zambian Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services, Mwansa Kapeya, by civil society organisation representatives and the Zambia Chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA).

The resolutions were formulated based on deliberations and discussions during the conference by participants that included the Zambian Members of Parliament, policymakers, the African Platform on Access to Information (APAI), representatives of UNESCO, the Southern African Parliamentary Trust, Access to Information (ATI) advocates, civil society groups, local community leaders, private sector representatives, stakeholders and media practitioners.

While reaffirming “that improved access to information is important for Africa’s socio, cultural, economic and political development”, the conference noted that “access to information is fundamentally important to both government and citizens in order for government to ensure the said development”.

The conference therefore calls “on government to ensure that ATI legislation should be effectively used to enable the realisation of socio-economic and cultural rights” and that such legislation should be in accordance with regional and international principles and standards.

On receiving the resolutions, Honorable Kapeya stated that his Ministry would be presenting a policy document before Parliament on Tuesday, November 19, regarding Access to Information in Zambia. He reiterated that government was committed to enacting ATI legislation and was so far making progress in this regard.

As he handed the document to the Minister, Mr Andrew Nthewewe, the executive director of the Young Leadership Initiative, commented on the slow pace of enactment of ATI legislation in democratised African states.

He said many such countries are signatories to various regional and international instruments that compel them to guarantee their citizens the right of access to public information. “The conference was deeply concerned that Zambia and many other countries have democratised, while their legal systems have continued to lag behind the political dispensation,” said Nthewewe.

The regional conference aptly titled *Leveraging Continental Developments to Enhance the Adoption of Access to Information Laws in Africa* was organised jointly by MISA-Zambia Chapter and the MISA Regional Secretariat, in collaboration with the African Platform on Access to Information (APAI), the Open Society Institute of Southern Africa (OSISA), Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), the World Bank and the Zambia Governance Foundation.

Experts around the issue of the right to access to information were brought together in Lusaka, 25 - 27 September, to review the regional achievements made on access to information, and most crucially, to discuss how to domesticate the principles of the APAI declaration and to foster Zambia’s campaign for the enactment of a national ATI law. The conference was attended by groups from various sectoral backgrounds highlighting the overarching scope of transparency and open access, and its impact on the advancement of a country’s overall development.

MISA welcomes Honorable Kapeya’s expressed commitment towards access to information in Zambia, and renews its call for the speedy enactment of a law that would guarantee the right to access to information for all Zambian citizens.

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