



**REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA  
THE JUDICIARY**

**OPENING REMARKS**

**BY THE HONOURABLE CHIEF JUSTICE**

**DR. MUMBA MALILA, SC.**

**AT THE**

**INTERACTIVE MEDIA WORKSHOP**

**14<sup>th</sup> October, 2022**

**TAJ PAMODZI HOTEL, LUSAKA**

## **SALUTATIONS**

It is a great privilege and honour for me to be part of this interactive media workshop designed to discuss media ethics in court reporting. I understand that the participants, drawn from a cross section of the print and electronic media outlets, will in the next couple of hours remind each other of the 'dos' and 'dents' in media coverage of court news. I suggest that this initiative by the Judiciary, the first of its kind, should be a permanent feature in the Judiciary and media relations landscape for it touches on a very essential ingredient to the right to a fair trial. As we all are aware, one of the important facets of the right to a fair trial is the right to a public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal.

A public hearing in turn entails that all the necessary information about the sitting of a judicial body shall be made available to the public. This is why public facilities are provided in court for attendance by interested members of the public. Public trials enable the general public to see that the justice system is functioning properly and treating those appearing in court fairly. The presence of interested observers aims at keeping adjudicators, lawyers and courtroom staff mindful of their responsibilities and actions, and in the process, accountable.

Further, representatives of the media are entitled to be present at and report on judicial proceedings because when the media reports what happens in court, they thereby make sure that justice happens fairly.

We also know that media coverage of court proceedings may bring about unintended consequences such as prejudicial pretrial publicity, infringement of court rules, misreporting or misrepresentation of information, sensationalisation of issues, defamation of parties etc. All these and more are things that could be avoided when journalists follow a strict code of conduct or where no code exists, when they train themselves to report ethically. By this I mean that in their reporting of court matters, journalists should pay the closest attention to ensure that they are impartial, objective and balanced in their reporting. They should equally take keen interest in avoiding bias, respecting the privacy of the litigants, witnesses and victims, and above all the rules of court such as non-disclosure of the identity of child victims. Journalists should equally avoid including value judgments in their reports and stereotyping parties to litigation. They should also be alive to avoiding defaming persons and

keeping away from acts that would invite contempt proceedings.

This interaction is also essential in different sense. There is much misperception or in some cases complete ignorance about the workings of the judiciary as an institution or individual courts within in the judiciary. Some media houses find it convenient to misreport or misrepresent what happens within the judiciary rather than take time to find out information form our public relations unit. With interactions like this we hope that a conducive environment will be created for the free flow of information.

I have no doubt that the next couple of hours you will spend exchanging notes will be enormously rewarding.

Please feel free to interrogate and discuss these issues candidly. I wish you happy deliberations.

I thank you.