



Speech by ERB Executive Director, Mr Silvester H Hibajene on behalf of Communications Authority of Zambia and National Water Supply & Sanitation Council on the official Launch of the Lusaka Consumer Watch Group on Saturday, 10th June 2006.

**Chairperson of the Energy Regulation Board, Mrs F. Mwangala Zaloumis
Vice Chairperson of the Communications Authority of Zambia, Ms Elizabeth Kachamba,
Board Member of the Energy Regulation Board, Mr Chiteta Ching'ambu,
Communications Authority of Zambia Chief Executive Officer, Mr Shuller Habeenzu,
National Water Supply & Sanitation Council Director, Mr Oswald Chanda,
Utility representatives
Members of the Lusaka Consumer Watch Group,
The Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

On behalf of the Communications Authority of Zambia (CAZ) Energy Regulation Board (ERB) and National Water Supply and Sanitation Council (NWASCO), I wish to welcome you all to this very important and long awaited occasion.

As some of you may already be aware, on November 8, 2005, the three main regulatory bodies - CAZ, ERB, and NWASCO signed a Memorandum of

Understanding (MoU) which formed the basis of the establishment of a Regulatory Alliance. This Alliance's main objective is to facilitate the sharing of useful information on best practices - an interaction which will enhance the regulatory capacity of the three agencies in issues of formulation and implementation of regulatory procedures and systems that can facilitate improvement of the performance of the regulators.

However, the immediate focus for the Regulatory Alliance is to encourage consumer participation in the regulatory process with the view of addressing issues affecting consumers including monitoring the quality of service being provided to them.

It is a globally known fact that an increase in consumer participation in the industry is synonymous with economic growth. It has therefore become imperative for regulators in Zambia to re-focus their attention to encompass the welfare of consumers as a vital component in ensuring service providers meet their obligations. Much as we appreciate and encourage expansion and investment in their operations by service providers, we believe their very existence depends on consumers and they should therefore pay more attention to ensuring the rights of consumer. This can only be done in a transparent and engaging environment and by putting in place, effective monitoring tools.

As such, the Regulators have embarked on a programme to establish voluntary Consumer Watch Groups in different parts of the country to look into the interests of consumers in the Energy, Water and ICT sectors respectively. These structures' mandate includes addressing consumer complaints and educating consumers about not only their rights but their obligations as well.

We are therefore very pleased to present to you the first Consumer Watch Group to be established through this initiative – The Lusaka Consumer Watch Group. This group comprises members of the consumer community who were selected

from over 200 applicants who responded to our advertisement. They were short listed, interviewed and selected in a transparent manner and have already undergone an orientation programme. A number of them were members of the former Lusaka Water Watch Group which was operated under the umbrella of our colleagues NWASCO. This has since been transformed to the Lusaka Consumer Watch Group to cover issues affecting all the three sectors.

We are optimistic this initiative will bridge the gap between service providers, consumers and regulators as well as resolve previously outstanding complaints. We as Regulators also expect to benefit from the feedback this process is expected to obtain from the consumer community - information which, will be utilized in reviewing our respective guidelines and regulations.

Service Providers will also benefit by utilizing the feedback they receive from their consumers to improve the quality of their service and actually use the same structures to convey important information to the consumer community.

In conclusion, we wish to pay special tribute to NWASCO for its willingness to share its experiences of the Water Watch Group concept from which we have borrowed heavily. We are very confident this development will yield the desired results and have direct benefit to our major stakeholder in the regulatory regime who is the consumer.

Ends.