STATEMENT BY THE HON. DR. SITUMBEKO MUSOKOTWANE, MP, MINISTER OF FINANCE AND NATIONAL PLANNING, ZAMBIA AT THE 2010 AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK ANNUAL MEETINGS ABIDJAN, CÔTE D’IVOIRE.

You’re Excellency, the Chairperson,
Your Excellencies,
Fellow Ministers of Finance and Governors of the Bank,
Dr. Donald Kaberuka,
President of the Bank,
Distinguished Invited Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure and honour to address this distinguished gathering at the annual meetings of the African Development Bank. At the outset, I wish to congratulate Dr. Kaberuka for the unanimous mandate he has earned to continue to head the Bank. Well done.

On behalf of my delegation, I would like to express my deepest thanks and appreciation to the people and government of Côte d’Ivoire for hosting these very important meetings for our Pan-African institution. I am humbled by the hospitality and cordial reception we have received since our arrival in this beautiful city of Abidjan. I wish to also join others to thank and commend the president of the Republic of Côte d’Ivoire, who agreed to grace the opening ceremony with his presence. In addition, I wish to also extend my gratitude to their Excellencies, the Presidents of Guinea, Mali and Togo for having taken time off to attend this year’s annual meetings.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our meeting today is taking place at a time when the global economy is beginning to recover from the challenges brought about by the global economic and financial crisis of 2009. This does not mean that the effect of the crisis to our economies will disappear
instantly. We have to deliberately reposition our Bank to increasingly play a bigger role in the development of our continent. It is for this reason that I am happy to note that the sixth general capital increase has been approved by the Board of Governors here in Abidjan. This is indeed a positive vote of confidence by member states in our Bank. More importantly Chairperson, it will provide our Bank additional headroom to finance development programmes in our countries.

I also welcome the extension of the payment period for shares under the sixth general capital increase for low income countries. This will, indeed, ensure that all member states retain their shareholding in the Bank. This is an important aspect of the Sixth General Capital Increase. As we recapitalize our institution, we should also ensure that the broader African voice continues to be heard both at the Board of Directors and Board of Governors level.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

When our founding fathers created this institution in 1964, their fundamental goal was to develop the continent and eradicate poverty. To this end, I urge the bank to continuously reflect on this noble goal and come up with innovative ways of assisting low income countries to achieve pro-poor growth. One way this can be done is to come up with a robust credit policy that would allow governments of low income countries to access ADB resources for infrastructure projects.

Closely related to this, is the issue of private sector development in our countries. I urge the bank not only to scale up its private sector operations in low income countries, but also to accelerate the implementation of private sector projects already approved.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I strongly support reforms that are currently taking place in the Bank as they will ensure that its considerable human and financial resources are deployed appropriately. There will be need for the Bank to give staff delegated authority to make decisions and drive the development process in our countries to justify the decentralisation programme initiated a few years ago. I know, chairperson, that the decentralisation programme has led to an
increase in the Bank’s administrative budget. Notwithstanding this, it is us the member states that requested that the Bank be represented in our countries. Now that this has happened, we must take full ownership and use of these offices.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to note that the Bank intends to revise its medium-term strategy in order to make it more responsive to the needs of our countries. This is as it ought to be. The Bank needs to select those areas in which it has comparative advantage. This, Chairperson, will ensure maximum impact, efficiency and positive results. The Bank will require to strike a balance between those areas it will undertake on its own and those in which it can play a catalytic role while letting others take the lead. I urge the Bank Management to stick to priority areas contained in the current medium-term strategy. This is very important if we are to avoid strategic drift.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me use this opportunity to welcome the initiative by the Bank to formalise the Governors dialogue at every annual meeting. This is an important step in the right direction and will enable us understand Bank issues as they evolve.

Chairperson,

Let me once again commend our host for a job well done in the hosting of these annual meetings. I know how difficult hosting such an event can be. That you have successfully done so is testimony of the determination your country has in supporting our pan African institution. I personally thank you for these efforts. Allow me also to extend my appreciation to Dr. Donald Kaberuka, President of the ADB and his staff for their role at these annual meetings. While we have only been here for a few days, we must recognise the efforts of Bank staff who have worked tirelessly for several months to make the 2010 annual meetings a complete success.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.