

**Statement by Head of the Zambia Delegation to the
65th Plenary Meeting of the International Cotton Advisory
Committee
(ICAC) – Mr. Richard M. Chizyuka, Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives**

Chairperson, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Firstly, on behalf of the Government and the people of Zambia, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC), Dr. Sipiwe Mkhize for having invited me and my delegation to the 65th Plenary Committee of the ICAC.

I would like to thank the Organizing Committee of this Meeting for the warm and cordial welcome accorded to me and my delegation and for the excellent arrangements put in place for the Meeting. This has afforded us great comfort and convenience making our short stay in Brazil memorable and treasured

The 65th Plenary Meeting of the ICAC is taking place at a time that is very important in the development of cotton and associated industries in my country, Zambia.

The production of cotton in Zambia reached a record of 81,000 tonnes of lint during the 2004/2005 season (about 190,000 tonnes of seed cotton). This crop is produced by about 200,000 smallholder farmers, out of a total smallholder farmer population of 800,000. Zambia is now the number two cotton producer in the Southern African Region after Zimbabwe with only less than 25% of its potential having been realised. The national ginning capacity is also growing as private sector investment into the sector increases.

Over US\$50 million was earned through cotton lint and related products by Zambia in 2005. Cotton is providing direct and indirect employment to an estimated 500,000 people in Zambia. Cotton has therefore assumed an important position in Zambia's economy. The long term prospects for continued growth are very good and promising. The

cotton sector is 100% private sector driven. This is as a result of the
Zambian economy, including the agricultural sector, having been since
liberalized in 1991.

However, there are serious challenges facing the development of cotton
in Zambia. The main challenges are the low farm yields, narrow range
of fibre on undeveloped cotton value-chain. These restrict growth in
farmer incomes, hamper enhanced benefits from an integrated cotton
value-chain, and limit the competitiveness of Zambian cotton. The
Government of Zambia has therefore, put in place policies that are
enabling and conducive for the private sector to successfully address
these problems. It is imperative to improve productivity and quality of
seed cotton in order to enhance the incomes of cotton farmers and reduce
poverty.

Although Zambia is not yet a member of the ICAC, Zambia fully
appreciates the positive contributions of the ICAC since its inception, to
the development of cotton in the world, particularly in disseminating

cotton production technology. Our own Cotton Development Trust, whose mandate is technology generation and transfer, is a beneficiary of the efforts of the ICAC. Zambia would therefore wish to consolidate and enhance these benefits by being part of the ICAC fraternity.

With the positive developments now taking place in the cotton sub-sector in my country, Government strongly feels that it is time Zambia became a member of the ICAC. Membership can be of great value and will provide tangible benefits for Zambia particularly in the form of increased access to statistical and technical information and funding for research and farmer extension. Membership will also provide the avenue for the cotton industry of Zambia to join fully into the fraternity of cotton countries in pursuing cotton issues of international scope and significance, particularly trade in cotton and textiles.

So far, I have taken the opportunity of my being here to interact fully with the ICAC Executive Committee and with ICAC member countries delegations to pursue positively Zambia's membership of the ICAC. It is

in this context therefore that I, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Zambia, wish to formally request you Mr. Chairperson, to solicit the support of the Advisory Committee to admit Zambia to ICAC membership. We are well aware of the obligations including financial, which arise from this request. I however wish to assure you, Sir that Zambia will meet all its commitment to ICAC, as a full member.

I thank you Chairperson.