

## **Caleb M Fundanga: The importance of multi-cultural awareness and language learning**

Opening remarks by Dr Caleb M Fundanga, Governor of the Bank of Zambia, at the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Bank of Zambia and the Chinese International School in Zambia, Lusaka, 22 December 2010.

\* \* \*

***The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Zambia, H.E Mr. Li Qiangmin***

***The Chairperson – Chinese International School in Zambia, Mr Li Tie***

***The Deputy Governor Administration – Dr Tukiya Kankasa-Mabula***

***The Deputy Governor Operations – Dr Austin Mwape***

***The Principal – Chinese International School in Zambia, Mr. Tan Haitao***

***Distinguished Teachers from the Chinese International School in Zambia***

***Colleagues from the Bank***

***Members of the Press***

***Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen***

It gives me great delight, on behalf of the Bank of Zambia, to welcome you all to this important signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Bank of Zambia and the Chinese International School in Zambia. The MoU that we are about to sign today provides a framework for the provision of Chinese language lessons to members of staff at the Bank of Zambia.

***Your Excellency***, the Bank of Zambia attaches great importance to the need for staff to learn other international languages. In the process of both economic globalization and diversity of culture, language has become more and more important. Multilingualism is important in our world today not only in terms of communicating and advancing in the global economy, but also in order to understand other cultures. It is important because we need to know more about other nations' cultures and history to improve world relations. In this regard, in October 2004, the Bank entered into an agreement with the Embassy of the Republic of France for the provision of French lessons to members of staff. To date several members of staff have benefited from this programme and can comfortably speak, write and understand the French language.

***Ladies and Gentlemen***, the importance of China on the world economy cannot be overemphasized. With the sustainable development of the Chinese economy and the increasing promotion of the status of China in the world, particularly the China's access to the World Trade Organization, the successful hosting of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai, it is imperative to understand the Chinese language owing to its important role in business and trading. There is therefore a need for people to understand Chinese culture, economy, politics, and the lives of 1.3 billion Chinese people.

Furthermore, the rapid growth of the Chinese economy has entailed greater demand for primary commodities like copper. Coupled with this, the demand for manufactured goods from China has increased in a number of countries including Zambia. The level of Chinese investment pouring into the country has also significantly increased while the Chinese community in the country has continued to grow following the rising number of Chinese investments in Zambia. The level of interactions between Zambian businesses and those from China has therefore significantly increased.

However, the obvious and notable obstacle to the smooth conduct of business transactions and interactions between the people of our two countries has been the language barrier. Many a time, communication between our people has been through the use of interpreters.

Reliance on interpreters can be very inconveniencing, ineffective and costly. This barrier can be overcome by learning the Chinese language.

It is against this background that the Bank has taken keen interest in launching this MoU. The principal objectives of the MoU are to:

- a) establish a framework in which the Chinese International School can facilitate capacity building in learning the Chinese language among BOZ employees;
- b) promote multi-cultural awareness and appreciation of a diversity of languages necessary for Bank staff to transact effectively and efficiently in social and professional fora which require the usage of Chinese; and
- c) enhance opportunities for bi-and or multilateral co-operation between the Bank and relevant Chinese-speaking authorities and stakeholders.

It is therefore our hope that the MOU we are signing today will assist in not only fostering stronger trade relationships between Zambia and China but to also avail our staff a multi cultural awareness which would assist them both in their official work and in developing their social networks. We also hope that staff will have opportunities for higher education in China and other South East Asian countries where the Chinese language is spoken. Allow me to mention here that, already three bank employees are currently pursuing Phd programmes in China under the Chinese Government scholarship programme. With the introduction of this initiative, it is my hope that more of our staff can be offered scholarships to study in China.

***In conclusion***, let me appeal to the members of staff who will be enrolled on the programme to take the course seriously bearing in mind the resources that the bank is investing into this undertaking. To this effect I urge the human resources department to enrol employees who are committed to learning the language. I also wish to thank the Chinese International School in Zambia for accepting our proposal and we look forward to a further cooperation with other Chinese institutions in order to foster the relations of our two countries.

***Lastly***, I want to thank you, Your Excellency, for finding time to witness this great occasion.

***I thank you all for your attention.***