I am greatly honoured to officiate at the 15th Drug Enforcement Commission (DEC) Senior Officers Conference and to officially launch the DEC Strategic Plan for the period 2013-2016.

Madam Commissioner,

I understand that this conference is held at the beginning of every year and acts as a round-table for the Commission to discuss achievements and failures of the past year, and provides a platform for planning for the New Year. Hence the importance of this conference cannot be over-emphasised.

I wish, therefore, to urge you and your team to take this planning and review Conference seriously as the task you have of combating illicit drugs and money laundering is complex and huge, and the people of Zambia expect a lot from you.

Ladies and gentlemen;
I am glad that this conference is also being used as a platform to launch the 2013-2016 DEC Strategic Plan. The Plan that is being launched today sets out bold and ambitious goals to combat illicit drugs and money laundering crimes in the Country.

**Madam Commissioner;**

The Vision and the Goals set out in this Plan will require services and expertise that may lie beyond the control of the Commission. Its successful implementation will therefore rely on the good will of my government including external organisations with shared goals and objectives.

The translation and implementation of this Plan into reality will also require continued commitment from DEC Command and all the staff in the Commission. It is gratifying to observe that you have already embarked on the vigorous process of implementing this Plan. The invitation of experts from the Management Development Division-Cabinet Office, to come and help you translate this Plan into Departmental and Individual work plans bears testimony of your commitment to the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

Therefore, on behalf of my government, and indeed on my own behalf, I wish to pledge continued support towards the successful implementation of this Plan.

**Ladies and gentlemen;**

This Plan could not have come at a better time than this when the world over is experiencing an increase in the production and abuse of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), that is, substances that are not under international control.

We need to inform the public that NPS are substances of abuse, either in a pure form or a preparation, that are not controlled by international drug conventions, but which may pose a public health threat. In this context, the term “new” does not necessarily refer to new inventions but to substances that have newly become available in specific markets.
It is sad to note that in Zambia, young people are abusing substances such as bostic, glue, nail polish remover and Jenkem. Some youths have even resorted to abusing prescription drugs such as Benylin that contains codeine.

**Madam Commissioner;**

I wish to urge you to initiate the process of reviewing the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (CAP 96) to capture the new developments in illicit drugs and New Psychoactive Substances. We need to be in tandem with international efforts against these substances by focusing our action on addressing both the supply of and demand for New Psychoactive Substances (NPS).

Further, the increase in the production and abuse of NPS and other drugs call for an urgent completion and operationalisation of the Drug Laboratory Facility which is under construction at the Drug Enforcement Commission Head office. This facility will enhance the Commission’s capacity to undertake research on NPS and other drugs, and improve the understanding of the nature of these substances, and help in the development of workable policies and strategies.

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

The UNODC report of 2013 also shows that the African Continent is increasingly becoming vulnerable to the illicit drug trade and organised crimes such as money laundering and terrorism.

Therefore, there is need to invest in evidence based interventions for the prevention of drug abuse, the treatment of drug dependence, the successful interdiction of illicit substances and the suppression of organised crimes.

In order to invest in evidence informed interventions; my government has been allocating resources for research in illicit drugs for the past two (02) years. For instance, in 2012, my government released funds for the purpose of undertaking a research on
“women involvement in drug trafficking”. This study was completed and launched last year.

The study provided deeper insight on what motivates women to engage in drug trafficking and this information will help the Commission and other stakeholders to develop preventive interventions in order to reduce the number of women involving themselves in drug trafficking.

Further, in 2013, my government allocated resources for another research on illicit drugs. This study, which will be undertaken this year by a Consultant from the Department of Gender at the University of Zambia, will focus on analysing the illicit drug situation in Zambia.

It is expected that the study on the situation analysis of illicit drugs will ultimately lead to the development of a National Policy on Narcotic drugs and Psychotropic substances. This will in turn inform new strategies and interventions in the fight against illicit drugs and substances.

Madam Commissioner:

Let me take this opportunity, on behalf of the government, to appreciate what you and your team achieved last year in combating illicit drugs, despite the challenges you have continued to face in carrying out your operations.

In addition, I wish to implore you not to relent in the vigorous fight against money laundering and other organised crimes. My government observed with gratitude the amount of money the Commission safe guarded on behalf of the people of Zambia in the year 2013.

I am glad that in an effort to enhance the fight against financial crimes and protect the economy of our country, the Commission has entered into the Memorandum of
understanding with the Bank of Zambia (BOZ). I wish to urge you to extend this collaborative initiative to institutions such as Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) and other financial institutions in order to effectively combat financial crimes such as tax evasion and fraud.

Madam Commissioner,

Let me also commend you on the efforts you are making in investigating cases of financial misappropriation in the public sector. The Auditor General’s report has continued to reveal glaring financial misuse year in year out. Therefore, I call upon you and your team to intensely study these reports and investigate possible financial misconduct in order to preserve and protect the country’s financial resources.

I also note with satisfaction that the Commission is leading by example in the prudent use of government resources as it was not cited in the 2011 and 2012 Auditor General’s reports for financial misappropriation.

Madam Commissioner;

As you embark on this review and planning process, I wish to implore you to reflect on the goals and objectives that you have set for yourselves in the 2013-2016 DEC Strategic Plan and also the new developments in illicit drugs and money laundering.

Regional Commanders and all the officers of the Commission;

I want to urge you all to take this Conference seriously, as planning is the corner-stone of any successful undertaking. Continue supporting your Commissioner in the quest to fulfil the mandate given to you by the people Zambia, and remember that the Commissioner’s failures are your failures and equally her successes are yours too.

Therefore, take this opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the Commission and adjust accordingly in the quest to achieve your goals through teamwork, innovation and zero tolerance to corruption.

Ladies and Gentlemen
I note with satisfaction that the theme for the Commission in 2014 is: “Achieving our goals through team work, innovation and zero tolerance to corruption”

This theme should ring in all the undertakings of the Commission.

Ladies and gentlemen;

With these remarks, it is now my singular honour to officially launch the DEC Strategic Plan for 2013-2016, and declare this conference officially open.

I wish you all a successful and fruitful planning process for the year 2014.

I THANK YOU!