

**STATEMENT BY**  
**Hon Speaker Pius Msekwa on the occasion of the**  
**LAUNCHING OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ON LINE INFORMATION**  
**SYSTEM (POLIS)**  
**29<sup>th</sup> March, 2004**

The Rt. Hon Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania,  
Your Excellency the UNDP Administrator, Mr Mark Malloch Brown,  
Hon Ministers,  
Hon Members of Parliament,  
Representatives of the Data Vision International (T) Ltd.,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

In October 2001, the Parliamentary Services Commission (Tume ya Huduma za Bunge), which is under the Chairmanship of the Speaker himself, unanimously adopted an important document entitled THE FIVE YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE PARLIAMENT OF TANZANIA which was professionally developed for us by Data Vision International (T) Ltd. of Dar es Salaam. The main objective of the Plan is to improve the working conditions of our parliament, its staff members, as well as for the individual parliamentarians both at headquarters level in Dodoma, and at their constituency levels in terms of infrastructural development, including the provision of information and communication technology (ICT).

Hon. Prime Minister,

With regard to the physical infrastructural development, the 5 year plan envisaged the following works:-

- (i) the renovation and expansion of the Dar es Salaam Bunge office. This was given first priority because of the decision taken that all Parliamentary Standing Committees will hold all their regular meetings in Dar es Salaam. It was therefore necessary to construct very quickly new committee rooms for that purpose.
- (ii) the construction of a new modern Bunge office building in Zanzibar.
- (iii) the construction of Constituency Offices for all constituency members of parliament, and other offices at District and Regional Headquarters for use by non-constituency members of parliament.

I am happy to report here that phase I of the renovation and expansion of the Dar es Salaam Bunge Office has recently been completed, and with effect from today not less than seven Parliamentary Standing Committees are holding their meetings simultaneously in the new facilities. Phase II will provide the remaining number of Committee rooms, so that each of the Standing Committees will have its own meeting room.

Hon. Prime Minister,

I am happy to report further that we expect to lay the foundation stone for the new very modern Bunge Office Building at Tunguu in Zanzibar towards the end of next month, as part of the Union anniversary celebrations.

Our Development plan was deliberately devised to make it very flexible in terms of implementation. It gave us a variety of alternatives and scenarios of implementation, which enables us to implement the prioritized activities depending on the availability of resources.

The question of the information and communication infrastructure development, was also given very high priority in terms of implementation, because it is one of the most important requirements for good governance in modern times. The management of parliamentary information is absolutely crucial in enabling our parliament to accomplish its noble constitutional role. This is because we need to make available to the general public all the relevant information that comes out of parliament, in order to achieve the desired goal of transparency, which again is a vital component of good governance.

In the light of this realization, and with funding support from the UNDP, my office once again contracted Data Vision International (T) Ltd. by an agreement signed on 14th September 2002, to develop for us this Parliamentary On Line Information

System (POLIS) which we are happily inaugurating today. The system has already been commissioned, and can be accessed through [www.parliament.go.tz](http://www.parliament.go.tz) or through [www.Bunge.go.tz](http://www.Bunge.go.tz)

We have prudently taken appropriate steps to create the necessary environment required for hosting and maintaining this advanced system; such as the acquisition of a website to accommodate POLIS; and the recruitment and training of the required staff members who will handle all the POLIS related activities.

In general, the system which we are inaugurating today is intended, among other things, to create a paperless electronic parliament (e-parliament) which will enable our institution to achieve the following goals.

- The creation of a robust method of entering, storing, updating, and accessing information relating to the activities of our august House.
- Increasing public awareness of the activities of the House.
- Enhancing the workflow through virtual electronic sharing of information and documents.
- Enabling the MPs to electronically access any information even when they are in their constituencies, through the web-enabled system, thus reducing printing & postage costs.

- Reducing the risks which are related to storing paper based documents. These risks include misplacement, destruction by fire, theft, etc.
  
- Reducing the costs of reproducing and managing a large number of physical documents

Hon. Prime Minister,

In the process of developing this system, we started with the identification of the relevant navigational tools that are needed for the improvement of our parliamentary services. These include the production, storing, up-dating and sharing of this information with other stakeholders.

As of to day, no less than five navigational tools have been fully developed. They are the following:-

- (i) The MPs profile Data base system.
- (ii) The Acts of parliament management system.
- (iii) The Bills tracking system.
- (iv) The Parliamentary sessions management system.
- (v) The Parliamentary documents management system. This will contain Hansards, Order Papers, Papers laid on the Table and all the reports which are routinely presented to parliament, including Committee reports, International Treaties, Government Gazettes etc.

Our main objective is to completely transform and modernize the management of all the Bunge delivery systems, in order to upgrade our institution to the highest technical level of an electronic parliament (e-parliament), in which ICTS and digital strategies will be employed fully in the carrying out of our institutional functions.

It is actually in recognition of the immense value which this system is going to have, not only in relation to our parliamentary operations, but also to many other stakeholders, that we decided in close collaboration with our development partners the UNDP, to publicly launch this project today, in order to make its presence known to everybody. We are very delighted and honoured to have the UNDP administrator Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, with us in person at the function. Sir, you are most welcome. And Karibuni sana to all our distinguished guests.

Hon. Prime Minister,

I would like to take this opportunity also to announce the commencement of yet another major Bunge modernization project, which had initially not been included in our five-year plan, but was subsequently accepted by the government as a necessary part of the modernization programme.

I am referring to the construction of a new, ultra-modern, state-of-the art assembly chamber for our parliament in Dodoma.

I am happy to report that tenders for the construction of that facility have already been evaluated, and it is expected that the Central Tender Board will soon appoint a contractor for that project.

I will now conclude my statement on a more personal note. I am especially happy and grateful to have had the very good fortune of being the incumbent Speaker at this material time, presiding over these momentous modernization arrangements, which will eventually transform our Bunge from an old-fashioned institution to a new, modern, paperless electronic parliament. This reminds of the motto of Makerere University College when I was a student there many years ago. It said in latin as follows :- "*profuturo edificamus*" meaning "we build for the future".

I am therefore personally overwhelmed by today's events. Having presided over the preparations of the five-year development programme for our parliament, it is such a great pleasure for me to be witnessing today the official launching of one very important component of that programme. We are indeed "building for the future" generations of Tanzania's parliamentarians.

Mr Prime Minister,  
Distinguished Guests,

*We are building for the future*  
I thank you all for your kind attention.