



**YEAR-END ADDRESS BY ICTAZ PRESIDENT Dr. CLEMENT SINYANGWE
MONDAY, 23 DECEMBER 2024 VIA GOOGLE MEET**

2024: A Year of Milestones and Progress

Dear Esteemed Members,

Compliments of the season! As we conclude 2024, we celebrate a year that stands as a testament to the remarkable strides we have made together. This year has been characterized by milestones achieved through your unwavering dedication and support.

This address is not only an opportunity to reflect on our shared journey but also to realign our vision for the future. Thank you for joining this webinar and for your steadfast commitment to ICTAZ.

A Decade of Progress

Our association was founded on the principle that ICT professionals deserve distinct recognition as a profession. For over a decade, dedicated individuals across the public and private sectors have worked tirelessly to elevate ICT to its rightful place, separate from the shadows of the engineering sector.

From 2012 to 2018, efforts to secure legal recognition were numerous and persistent. Today, ICTAZ stands tall, proud of the standards and progress we've established to distinguish ICT professionals from general technology users.

Reflecting on 2024: Achievements and Milestones

1. Expanding Beyond the Midlands

This year saw the introduction of the Northern Region Mini-ICT Conference, tailored to the mining and industrial sectors. The inaugural event in Solwezi was a resounding success, and we eagerly anticipate the second edition in February 2025.

2. Membership Growth and Stakeholder Engagement

We have continued to score in growth membership. Over the past two years, we have seen the growth of membership up to over 300%. Last year, with the help of SZI, we managed to onboard about 400 civil servants onto our database. We established a mechanism where compliance and payments by civil servants are being done directly through payroll.

With our continued work, the impact we have continued to make in the industry is there and evident for everyone to see. The strong stakeholder engagement we have established has continued to yield results for the Association. Day in, day out, we are called upon for different assignments both in the public and private sectors. Most of you will agree that whenever you have made yourself available, the Secretariat has reached out to you to represent the Association. Just two weeks ago, we were amongst the few resource institutions that presented at the 56th Plenary Assembly of the SADC Parliamentary Forum in Livingstone.

Other examples are reaffirmed by the number of media engagements we continue to have.

Our collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Technology and Science, led by Honourable Felix Mutati, have been instrumental, ensuring participation in all major events.

ICTAZ gained international recognition as a primary member of the Technology Information Confederation Africa (TICONA). Zambia proudly claimed the ICT Professional of the Year award through Christopher Lalusha of NAPSA, competing against TICON Africa member countries.

3. Resource Mobilization and Financial Growth

Audited financial statements reflect prudent management, resulting in substantial revenue growth and a strengthened balance sheet.

4. Quarterly External Audits

Conducting quarterly audits has enhanced our ability to address operational gaps promptly, ensuring excellence.

5. Successful Conferences and AGMs

Attendance at our conferences grew from an average of 100 to over 600 delegates. These events now provide platforms for collaboration, capacity building, and professional development.

Introducing training sessions at conferences has been well-received, aligning with our commitment to member development.

6. Strengthening Corporate Governance

To enhance corporate governance and improve the way ICTAZ operates, we have made significant strides in this area. Key achievements include restructuring the Executive Council to function as a Board and establishing Committees under this Board to strengthen oversight and operational efficiency.

In addition to the Professional Ethics and Compliance Committee (PE&C) and the Membership Registration Board, which are mandated by the Act and Statutory Instruments, we have introduced four additional committees:

- **Governance and Human Capital Committee**
- **Operations, Technical Affairs, and Professional Development Committee**
- **Audit and Risk Committee**
- **Finance and Business Development Committee**

To guide these committees and their members, we established the first-ever ICTAZ Board Charter, complete with Terms of Reference (TORs) for each committee. This charter serves as a foundational document to ensure clarity and alignment in board operations.

For the first time in the Association's history, we also conducted corporate governance training for Board members. This initiative was designed to equip them with the skills necessary to effectively manage the organization's affairs. Additionally, we fully implemented the PE&C Committee, as required by the Act and Statutory Instruments.

To address vacancies in the PE&C Committee not filled during the AGM elections, we appointed Mr. BGS and Mr. Ngoi Kalamatila as acting members, representing the corporate and public sectors, respectively, until the next by-elections at the AGM.

Looking ahead, we are in the process of engaging a Secretary/Legal Counsel on a retainer basis. This role will focus on managing legal matters and serving as a key advisor to the Association. One of their first assignments will be to ensure all employment contracts are aligned with applicable employment statutes and to draft a robust and enduring constitution for the Association.

These initiatives demonstrate our commitment to embedding strong governance practices that will ensure ICTAZ's long-term success and sustainability.

7. Staff Welfare Improvements

With council approval, we have restructured staff roles and enhanced conditions of service, positioning ICTAZ as an employer of choice.

8. Modern ERP System Launch

In October, we launched a robust ERP system integrating financial, procurement, human capital management, and membership modules. This platform enables

seamless payment integration and offers members tools to manage their finances, CPDs, and skills.

9. Property Acquisition

ICTAZ is finalizing the purchase of our current premises. With partial payments completed and legal formalities underway, we anticipate full ownership in January 2025. Future plans include renovations and the eventual construction of an ICTAZ House.

10. Celebrating Excellence

The 2024 ICTAZ ICT Awards and Gala Dinner at Intercontinental Hotel celebrated the industry's finest. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and we are committed to raising the bar even higher in future events.

11. Finalizing Statutory Instruments (SIs)

The journey to solidify our establishment has been one of mixed experiences. We've encountered both smooth paths and moments that tested our resilience, demanding that we dig deep within ourselves to keep believing and pushing forward.

Our Act was enacted in 2018, and it has taken us six solid years to finalize the Statutory Instruments (SIs). Six years is a significant span of time, and when we reflect on this, it's clear that such a delay is not only unusual but indicative of underlying issues. However, the good news is that we have arrived at this point, and we now have the SIs in place.

Allow me to briefly take you through our journey:

- The Bill's evolution into an Act.
- The process leading up to the finalization of the SIs.

Dear members, I would like to highlight that the drafting of the SIs has been a meticulous, back-and-forth process involving numerous stakeholders. We had contributions from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Technology, various regulatory agencies, the Judiciary, ICTAZ, and others.

One of the challenges we faced, contrary to our wishes and advice, was the requirement stated in Section 21(7) of the Act, which mandates that the Practising Certificate fees be explicitly prescribed in the SIs. This was an unfortunate aspect of the Act's design. While drafting the SIs, we also identified areas where we felt improvements could have been made. It's important to recognize that much has changed in the past six years since the Act was first enacted, and what was once fit for purpose - is now somewhat outdated.

In addition to the issue of fee prescription in the SIs, we also recognized other sections in the Act that require comprehensive revision. At the point of drafting the SIs, we faced a pivotal choice: either suspend the process and push for a repeal of the Act (which would have meant starting from scratch) or move forward with the current framework, accepting minor imperfections and using it as a foundation for future improvements. We chose the latter.

By proceeding, we now have a framework to work with, and once this is in place, we can collaborate closely to determine the best way forward. Rest assured, we've established a strong relationship with the National Assembly, and moving forward, we anticipate a less cumbersome process than what we faced previously.

12. Revision of Membership Fees

The signing of the Statutory Instruments (SIs) brings us to the next important issue at hand: the revision of fees. Since the announcement was made, we have received a wide range of feedback on this matter. Before we dive deeper into the discussion, I want to assure you that both the previous and current Executive Councils have always acted with the best interests of our members in mind.

As previously mentioned, the formulation of the SIs required us to prescribe the fees. Several factors were carefully considered in determining these fees, one of which was the understanding that, because they are now part of the SIs, any revision will require a formal process. Additionally, it's important to note that the fees had not been revised in many years. Despite this revision, the fees remain among the lowest compared to most professional bodies. I encourage you to conduct a survey and compare.

We do acknowledge that an earlier notice would have been ideal. Unfortunately, we faced challenges in completing the SI process. The SIs were only signed in late October and gazetted in mid-November, and I take full responsibility for the delay.

Colleagues, running the Association requires adequate resources. To deliver the value that you expect as members, we need those resources. It has been quite a while since the fees were last revised, and as such, the increase may appear substantial. However, please rest assured that careful consideration was given to the adjustment, and we believe these are the best possible rates under the current circumstances.

Challenges We Faced

1. Building the Association's Reputation

ICTAZ can only deliver the much-needed value to our members if we truly build a strong and reputable name for the Association. I urge each of you to speak positively about ICTAZ. Unfortunately, at times, we have inadvertently undermined our own reputation, creating doubts among our stakeholders. I encourage everyone to be ambassadors for ICTAZ and advocate for a good name for our Association.

2. Lacunas in the Current Constitution

The gaps in our current constitution presented a significant challenge, particularly as we approached elections. The need for a strong, timeless constitution is urgent, and the time to address this is now. Rest assured, we are committed to delivering a revised constitution that meets these needs.

3. Lack of a Modern Membership System

The absence of a modern membership system deprived us of the essential member data we needed to deliver personalized value. Without this information, it was challenging to understand our members and cater to their needs effectively. We now have the system in place, and I encourage each of you to ensure you are properly onboarded so that you do not miss out on the benefits it provides.

4. The Lengthy Process of Formulating the SIs

The extended process of formulating the Statutory Instruments (SIs) was a significant challenge. Many initiatives were delayed as a result. Although we only succeeded in completing this task toward the end of the year, we are pleased that we have now moved past this stage.

5. Election Process and Post-Election Challenges

The election process, particularly the petition that followed, resulted in a loss of time and momentum. The newly elected Executive Committee (Exco) could not assume full operations until the case was resolved. However, there is value in having a strong and mature democracy where everyone has the right to exercise their democratic rights. This process demonstrates the maturity we have achieved as an Association.

6. Lack of Cost-Indicative Fees

The absence of cost-indicative fees has posed operational challenges and hindered our ability to deliver value effectively.

Looking Ahead

We have worked tirelessly to establish ICTAZ, ensuring that the legal and regulatory frameworks are in place. We have built a strong and trusted ICTAZ brand, and now it is time to deliver the much-needed value to you, our members.

Looking forward, we have just concluded our current strategic plan and are now in the process of drafting a new three-year 2025 – 2027 plan. This upcoming plan will focus on value to all our members and stakeholders.

As we do so. It is important to realise that as a professional body, there is no greater value we can create for professionals than fostering professional growth, establishing a platform for continuous capacity building, signing meaningful and impactful memoranda of understanding, fostering collaborations, linking you to opportunities, spotlighting your profiles and achievements, and establishing a firm platform for you to flourish amongst, many others.

Key priorities will include:

Strengthen the ICT Profession in Zambia

1. Developing Our Own ICT Standards

- Form a dedicated committee to draft ICT standards that address local and regional needs.
- Align standards with global best practices while considering Zambia's unique challenges.

2. Advocating for the Profession

- Increase participation in policy discussions and advocate for ICT professionals' recognition in legislative processes.
- Launch public awareness campaigns showcasing the critical role of ICT in national development.

3. Establishing Professional Development Programs

- Offer certifications, continuous learning opportunities, and training tailored to market demands.
- Organize workshops and conferences featuring industry leaders and cutting-edge technologies.

Empower Members Through Opportunities

4. Offering Exclusive Business and Individual Opportunities

- Facilitate exclusive access to business leads, partnerships, and job postings through a dedicated portal.
- Provide members with financial, legal, and marketing tools to support their entrepreneurial ventures.

5. Spotlighting Achievements

- Create an online showcase for members' projects and contributions to the ICT field.
- Host recognition events like an annual gala and award ceremonies to highlight member accomplishments.

6. Enhancing Networking Opportunities

- Foster member collaboration through structured networking events, mentorship programs, and regional meetups.
- Build a digital platform for members to exchange ideas, share resources, and connect with potential collaborators.

Foster Collaboration and Growth

7. Fostering Collaborations

- Establish partnerships with global ICT organizations and institutions to provide international exposure and resources.
- Encourage cross-sector collaboration by integrating ICT expertise into projects in energy, agriculture, and healthcare.

8. Ensuring Relevance

- Conduct periodic market research to identify trends and adapt offerings to the evolving industry landscape.
- Provide thought leadership through publications, research reports, and national ICT position papers.

9. Fostering Innovation

- Launch innovation challenges to encourage members to develop solutions for real-world problems.

- Create an "ICTAZ Innovation Hub" to incubate ideas and support startups within the association.

Protect and Elevate the Industry

10. Protecting Our Industry

- Advocate for strict enforcement of ICT regulations and the use of certified professionals in all ICT roles.
- Educate members about compliance requirements and provide tools to ensure adherence to regulations.

11. Establishing a Solid Foundation for Our Voice

- Develop a robust communications strategy to position ICTAZ as a trusted authority in ICT matters.
- Engage in regional and global forums to ensure Zambia's ICT agenda is represented and advanced.

12. Creating a Unified Member Database

- Implement a centralized, modern membership system to track professional profiles and provide tailored support.
- Use data insights to design programs and initiatives that directly meet member needs.

Appreciations

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the following individuals and organizations for their unwavering support:

- The Hon. Minister, Felix Mutati, and the entire Ministry
- The Permanent Secretary, Directors, and Members of Staff at the Ministry
- The National Coordinator, GCICTO, Directors, and Staff at Smart Zambia
- Our Members (both Corporate and Individual)
- The Executive Council, both past and present
- The Secretariat
- Our Partners

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Conclusion

The four-year strategic plan (2020-2024) has run its course, highlighting areas for improvement and focus to meet member and stakeholder expectations. In 2025, we aim to:

- Expand public and private sector membership.
- Grow Student Chapters from 12 to 20, fostering industry-ready graduates through mentorships, hackathons, and internships.

Change is inevitable, but so is growth. Let us continue to evolve into a professional body we are all proud to belong to.

Compliments of the season, and I look forward to your active participation in 2025.

Together, we have achieved much, and the future holds even greater promise. Thank you for your commitment, resilience, and belief in our shared vision.