



## Zambia eyes AU top job

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**VICE-PRESIDENT** Rupiah Banda has appealed to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the rest of Africa to support Zambia's candidate for the position of Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika.

Mr Banda made the appeal in Lusaka last evening when he launched the Zambia campaign for Dr Mbikusita-Lewanika, who is the country's ambassador to the United States.

"I wish to make an appeal for support to all our true friends in the SADC region as well as in Central, Eastern, Northern and West Africa," Mr Banda said.

"Zambia strongly believes that together we can shape the future of our continental organisation so that it may better protect African interests and facilitate economic growth and overall development for the benefit of all the African peoples."

He said the AU faced many challenges that called for the reinvigoration of the continental organisation to enable it rise to the occasion.

The AU needed to take a new direction in the manner it conducted business in the changed circumstances.

"I am convinced that our candidate will bring to the organisation the required dynamism needed to revitalise our continental organisation,"

he said.

Mr Banda called on citizens to rally behind Government as it spearheads the campaign.

"You are all urged to take advantage of every single opportunity of interaction on every single forum to, whether regional, continental or international, to drive the campaign that is about to begin," he said.

He said southern Africa has never produced a candidate for the continental top job. It was against that background that Zambia seized the opportunity to vie for the post.

And Dr Mbikusita-Lewanika thanked President Mwanawasa for finding her worthy to be Zambia's candidate for the position.

"I pledge not to let you down. I am eager and ready to accept the nomination," she said.

Earlier Chief Government spokesperson Mike Mulongoti announced in a statement that government had nominated Dr Mbikusita-Lewanika, as candidate for the AU top job in view of the elections that takes place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2008.

"I urge all Zambian friends and well-wishers on the continent and in the international arena to support and actively participate in the campaign for the candidature of Ambassador Mbikusita-Lewanika," he said.

Mr Mulongoti, who is also Minister of Information and Broadcasting Services, invited

all Zambian supporters to seize every opportunity that might arise within the country or outside to campaign for Dr Mbikusita-Lewanika.

"A special appeal is addressed to the womenfolk in Africa to lend their solid support to our Zambian candidate. Let us all support Dr Mbikusita-Lewanika and ensure that she carries the Zambian flag in the AU Commission," he said.

The minister said Dr Mbikusita-Lewanika had been associated with the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which was the forerunner of the AU.

She has also participated in the drafting of the Charter of the African Child and chaired several OAU workshops on gender mainstreaming.

Mr Mulongoti said Dr Mbikusita-Lewanika also competently served as member of the African Women Committee on Peace and Development.

Dr Mbikusita-Lewanika served as member of Parliament from 1991 to 2001 during which time she served on the parliamentary committee on foreign affairs.

She was once appointed as President Mwanawasa's special envoy to the OAU when the President was chairperson from 2001 to 2002.

Dr Mbikusita-Lewanika holds a PhD in Early Childhood and Education-Teacher Educator and a Masters Degree in Education and Psychology.

*VICE-PRESIDENT Rupiah Banda yesterday introduced Zambia's candidate for the post of Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika. In the background are ministers of Home Affairs Ronnie Shikapwasha and Sylvia Masebo (Local Government and Housing.)*