An Ombudsman is a person, who is usually but not always, appointed by the Government, to represent the interests of the public by investigating and addressing complaints reported by individual citizens.
The concept of the Institution of Ombudsman dates back to Sweden in 1809, when the Swedish Parliamentary Ombudsman was established in order to safeguard the rights of citizens. The Ombudsman’s Office was set up to be a supervisory agency which was independent of the executive branch of government. In the 1960s, the institution spread to Europe and other parts of the world. The ombudsman Office has been recognised as an office provided for by the Constitution or by action of the Legislature and is headed by an independent high level official called the Ombudsman. In Zambia the Official is currently known as the Public Protector but was formally designated as the Investigator-General.

The concept of the Ombudsman was thus introduced in our Legislation through the 1973 Constitution. The Office of the Investigator General was created by Article 90 of the Constitution. The office became functional in 1974 under the provisions of an Act of Parliament called the Commission for Investigations Act (chapter 39 of the laws of Zambia) which provided for the mode of operations for the Institution. The recommendation was that there be created the institution to be styled as the Commission for Investigations. It was to be headed by the Investigator-General whose task was to investigate any matters of injustice or maladministration which affected members of the public, individually or collectively.

On 5th January, 2016, His Excellency Mr Edgar C. Lungu, the President of the Republic of Zambia signed the Constitution Bill Number 17 of 2015 which amongst other clauses changed the Office of the Investigator General to the Office of the Public Protector. As of 5th January, 2016, the functions of the Ombudsman of Zambia that were carried out by the commission of investigation have now been inherited by the Office of the Public Protector. This constitutional innovation provides the institution of the Public Protector with the necessary protection required of it to properly carry out the functions of the Ombudsman with integrity and independence.

According to Chapter 243 of the amended Constitution, it provides for the appointment of a Public Protector by the President, on the recommendation of the Judicial Service Commission, subject to ratification by the National Assembly.