

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.

CARITAS ZAMBIA DEMANDS JUSTICE FOR THE EARTH AND THE POOR.

LUSAKA | Fridayday, 5th June 2026

Introduction: A Shared Home, A Shared Responsibility

On behalf of the Catholic leadership in Zambia, we express our profound gratitude to all who observe the World Environment Day . We remember this day not merely to observe a date on the calendar, but to confront a defining moral crisis of our generation.

As a Church, our perspective on the environment is anchored in the prophetic words of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'* - “On Care for Our Common Home”. The Document reminds us that the Earth, our common home, "is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth." He challenges us to recognize that we cannot separate our relationship with nature from our relationship with God and each other.

At the heart of this document is a singular, urgent call: **to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.** Today, in Zambia, these twin cries are louder than ever.

The Cry of the Earth is heard in our drying riverbeds, our vanishing forests due to charcoal production, the shifting patterns of our rainy seasons, and the severe droughts that jeopardize our energy security and food systems.

The Cry of the Poor is heard in the voices of our small-scale farmers in Southern, Western, and Central provinces whose crops have withered. It is heard in our rural mothers who must walk further for clean water, and our youths facing economic insecurity because our climate-dependent economy is under strain.

The poor do not have the resources to adapt to the climate chaos they did the least to cause. Therefore, any true ecological approach must always become a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

This year's national theme, "**Accelerating Zambia's Climate Action for Green Growth and Sustainability**", is a timely answer to this moral imperative. Green growth cannot just be an economic policy; it must be an ecological conversion.

To accelerate action, the Church proposes three pillars of focus, blending the wisdom of Laudato Si' with our national aspirations:

1. From Exploitation to Stewardship (Green Growth)

True green growth requires a shift from an economy based on short-term exploitation to one based on long-term stewardship. As we exploit our mineral wealth—such as the copper needed globally for the green energy transition, we must ensure strict environmental safeguards. Green growth means our local communities must not inherit polluted waters and degraded lands while the wealth flows elsewhere.

2. Integral Ecology and Sustainable Agriculture

We must accelerate support for climate-smart, sustainable agriculture. Our smallholder farmers need rapid access to drought-tolerant seed varieties, agroforestry techniques, and solar-powered irrigation. By protecting our soil and biodiversity, we cure the Earth while feeding the poor.

3. Energy Transition with a Human Face

Zambia's current energy crisis highlights our vulnerability. Accelerating climate action means aggressively diversifying into solar, wind, and sustainable biogas. This transition must be decentralized so that the poorest rural health centers and schools are the first to be energized, ensuring no one is left behind in the dark.

The Church's Commitment and Call to Action

The Catholic Church in Zambia is not a mere bystander or critic; we are a committed partner. Through the Catholic Commission for Development (Caritas Zambia), our parishes, and our Catholic schools across the country, we pledge to:

- Continue rolling out community-based reforestation and conservation farming projects.
- Incorporate environmental education based on Laudato Si' into our school curriculums to raise a generation of eco-citizens.
- Utilize our vast network to promote clean cooking alternatives to reduce charcoal reliance.

A Final Appeal to the Nation

To the Government, we urge the swift and transparent implementation of national climate funds and policies, ensuring resources reach the grassroots where the suffering is greatest.

To our cooperating partners, we ask for climate justice, funding that comes not as high-interest loans that deepen our debt, but as grants to help us mitigate a crisis we did not create.

To every Zambian, Laudato Si' reminds us that "every little action counts." Planting a tree, conserving water, and protecting a nearby forest are acts of deep spiritual love.

Conclusion

Let us remember that the environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone. May this World Environment Day mark the end of complacency and the acceleration of a bold, unified Zambian action. Let us heal our land, so that we may secure a sustainable, green home for the children of tomorrow.

God bless our environment, and God bless the Republic of Zambia.



Fr. Dr. Gabriel Mapulanga
Executive Director, Caritas Zambia