

REVIEW OF ONE YEAR IN OFFICE FOR THE UPND GOVERNMENT

- A LOT NEEDS TO BE DONE FOR THE ZAMBIAN PEOPLE -

“Amen, I say to you, insofar as you did it for one of these least of my brothers (and Sisters), you did it for me.” (Mt 25: 40)

PRESS RELEASE

28th August 2022

President Hakainde Hichilema and Vice President Mrs. Mutale Nalumango took over leadership of former president Edgar Lungu led patriotic front, at a time when the world was reeling from a global pandemic, and an economy under severe stress, in addition to a mounting debt crisis. These economic challenges combined have continued to cause both high levels of Poverty and inequality in the country. During campaigns, the new dawn Government assured the citizens of returning to its development trajectory and economic prosperity, Country with a development that considers the inclusion of all citizens, leaving no one behind. Furthermore, the UPND promised that it would invest in the people to cultivate a human resource base, putting ample resources to preserve the welfare of the citizens without discrimination and provide health care, education, and investments in agriculture and mining.

This statement on the UPND's first anniversary is informed by the Churches' prophetic role that inspires it to speak out on behalf of the poor and marginalized in society. Guided by values of the dignity of every person, solidarity, the common good and subsidiarity, we make this analysis, in order to contribute to the search for solutions to the current crisis, hoping that Government will address the areas of concern that need attention.

Zambia is still faced with limited and poor quality of social infrastructure in both the urban and rural areas. This situation was laid bare when many pupils heeding the incentive of free education turned up in numbers putting pressure on the available classroom spaces. Caritas Zambia believes that public expenditure can only serve the interests of the poor, where political will is shown and inspires all to work together. There is need to confront and make difficult choices in order to change the social conditions of the citizens. However, political will alone, *is not sufficient*- there is also the aspect of political courage.

Over the last year of the UPND government, we have observed some progress in key sectors, as follows:

Restating the country back to its socio-economic development trajectory for prosperity:

During the past one year, Government has kept its promise and assurance that it was in the process of restating the country back to its socio-economic development trajectory. This effort has been seen in the way the government has handled the debt crisis. The heightened debate on debt and the opening of pathways towards its dismantling are positive economic signs. The previous government did not accept the fact that Zambia was experiencing a debt crisis and so they committed themselves to downplaying this fact. As a result, there was never an honest dialogue. Parliament has, over the years, been side-lined in the debt contraction although the 2016 constitution provided that parliament be involved in all matters concerning Zambia's debt contraction. The UPND government has made a lot of progress in opening up dialogue and moving towards the dismantling of both the domestic and international debt. By bringing together Zambia's debtors and making them realise the crisis so as to establish the best way of helping Zambia to make its debt sustainable, is a huge achievement. Caritas Zambia is also happy that a Public debt management bill is being considered by Parliament and will soon be enacted into law. In addition, the government has been sharing information on the status of the debt and have also come up with a debt dismantling strategy. This is commendable because Zambia needs order, transparency and accountability in the manner debt is contracted and used in the country. Parliament should have a significant role in this respect.

The rebirth of fundamental freedoms: We have seen the rebirth of fundamental values of respect, at both personal and mutual level for our democratic institutions. Today, people are freer to express differing viewpoints openly than before; Civil Society organisations are taking up their civic role without hindrances; and the value of a free and unfettered press is being recognised and respected. This is in contrast with the past where many organisations, including ours, experienced polarization and reduced civic space.

Legal Reforms: The UPND government has shown a lot of political will in carrying out legal reforms especially around the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of children's rights in Zambia. This is evident by the enactment of the children's Code Bill. The Government has also ratified two (2) of the three (3) option protocols. These are the first Optional Protocol which restricts children's involvement in military conflicts, and The Second Optional Protocol which prohibits the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Furthermore, the government is calling on citizens to participate in efforts being made towards electoral, constitutional and the POA reforms. We hope that these reforms will be anchored on a broad-based consensus among all Zambians. In addition, Caritas Zambia appeals to the New Dawn government to consider of the inclusion of the

expanded bill of rights so as to integrate economic, social and cultural rights¹ in the Constitution. This is the pledge made by the president in his first speech to the 1st session of the 13th National Assembly in September 2022.

We further appeal to the UPND Government to improve how information is shared and provided to the public on national matters. Our view is that this will enhance clarity on government rules, regulations and decisions made on behalf of the rights holders.

Responding to Climate change: During the one-year tenure, the new dawn government made several pronouncements aimed at addressing Climate Change adaptation and mitigation as well as natural resources management. A Ministry of Green Economy and Environment was created and later launched the National Climate Change Learning Strategy, a strategy aimed at raising awareness and strengthen climate change knowledge. We also commend government for showing commitment and making strides to develop a Green Growth Strategy in a quest to attain a low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive economy.

Introduction of free education - In a quest to respond to the needs and welfare of children and also the fulfilling the children's rights agenda in relation to vision 2030, the SDGs enshrined in the UNCRC, where Zambia is a signatory, the new dawn government on the 10th of January 2022 made their campaign promise of free education a reality. Children have now been given the opportunity to learn and develop themselves without paying school fees. Keeping Children in school, protects them from harmful vices such as child marriages, trafficking and others. The commitment and fulfilment of the promise by the UPND government on free education from grade 1 up to 12 for all government schools is very progressive for the country. So far from the time the free education was introduced, there has been reported high levels of enrolment, including those returning to school.

Recruitment of teachers: In a quest to address the teacher-pupil ratio which stands at about 150:1, the new dawn Government has recruitment over 30,000 teachers. This move will help to ensure that the quality of education offered by many pupils is not compromised and meets the required standards. The recruited teachers were deployed immediately and has so far, helped to address the gap being experienced by many schools of lack of teachers.

¹ Page 49 of th Speech by his excellency, president Hakainde Hichilema during the ceremonial opening of the 1st session of the 13th national assembly-September, 2021

Recruitment of health personnel: the new dawn Government also recruited over **11,000 health** workers. This move has also helped to address some of the challenges patients were facing related to insufficient health staff to take care of them. It is believed that a healthy nation is a powerful and productive nation; hence Health is a crucial sector in the survival and development of children and the entire population in country.

The Fight Against Corruption - The New Dawn government, raised many expectations regarding the fight against corruption. They promised an increased number of cases to be dealt with especially those reported after the 2021 general elections. The Government committed to a zero-tolerance to corruption. In order to make sure that people accused of financial crimes are tried quickly, a fast-track specialised court has been established. This court is also aimed at recovery of stolen assets from those who will be found guilty. This deserves commendations from us as Caritas Zambia.

However, Caritas Zambia implores the New Dawn government to ensure that the fight against corruption is not used as a tool to oppress and fight political opponents. This fight should be done in a very impartial and non-partisan manner with no sacred cows. Corruption is the same whether committed by any member serving in the current administration or others before or outside in the private sector. The; law should be applied equally. Thus, Caritas Zambia strongly caution the Executive arm of the Government not to be seen initiate arrests on the people suspected of having been involved in corrupt practices. This will negatively affect this noble fight the law enforcement agencies will not carry out their work professionally and independently.

Caritas Zambia agrees with His Excellence the Republican President, Mr Hakainde Hichilema when he says that, “we will increase the benefits of being honest and the cost of being corrupt. This will encourage people to love righteousness and abhor corruption and will enhance transparency and accountability in our national affairs, we will review the policy and legal framework for oversight institutions to enable them to effectively fight corruption and economic crimes. We will increase funding and enhance operational independence of oversight institutions. Further, we will introduce specialized fast-track stolen assets recovery mechanisms and courts for corruption and economic crimes. We will also enact legislation on ethics and integrity for improved transparency and accountability”.² Like earlier on alluded to, these are cardinal steps towards enhancing the fight against corruption.

² Speech by his excellency, president Hakainde Hichilema during the ceremonial opening of the 1st session of the 13th national assembly-September, 2021

Our Appeal

We edge the New Dawn Government, in going forward put in place mechanisms that will quickly help the country achieve these important commitments. Caritas Zambia emphasizes on the need for the Government to respect and protect the citizens' right to information along with a mechanism of enforceability³. It is our considered view that transparency in policy formulation and decision making, and implementation reduces uncertainty and can help inhibit corruption among public officials. This will in the end enhance accountability which often relates with citizen participation and the ultimate safeguard of predictability and transparency. We further remind the New Dawn government that transparency and information openness cannot be assured without legal frameworks that balance the right to disclosure against the right of confidentiality, and without institutions that accept accountability. This is the reason as to why as Caritas Zambia, we are emphasizing on the importance of putting in place legal frameworks that will effectively protect the citizens' right to information. Table the Access to information bill to parliament without any more delay.

Decentralization and CDF progressive strides - Devolved institutional systems of governance is the surest way for meaningful development which promotes effective and efficient service delivery at all levels. Hence, local governance structures such as Ward Development Committees (WDCs) play a critical role in providing a platform for community participation in the development process and also offer checks and balances on the functions and operations of local authorities. The UPND Government during the period under review has shown serious political will towards achieving the National Decentralisation Policy objectives. To this effect Government has increased CDF from ZMK1, 600 million to ZMK25, 700 million annually per constituency.

However, besides these positive strides, Government needs to;

1. Provide incentives and enabling environment that will promote faster growth through exporting more goods and services and accelerated Investment in areas of competitive advantage. The trade sector is an important pre-requisite for our need accelerated economic growth and economic development.
2. Encourage the processing of commodities into finished products and increase our levels of productivity to enjoy higher growth.

³ (ADB, 2004).

3. Generate more low-skilled jobs in our quest for higher growth thus also having a growth that means something to the ordinary people. This will help reduce the level of unemployment in Zambia as it is alarming; it is an economic crisis.
4. Improve the working conditions of public servants to act as incentives and motivation for efficiency; develop clear objectives and performance standards for each line ministry; strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of the public sector reform program and as well as making sure that the budget implementation, monitoring and reporting are systematic rather than ad hoc. This will equally encourage much-needed economic growth.
5. Accelerate infrastructure development for faster economic growth,
6. Diversify the economy urgently, moving from mining and selling role materials to agriculture and value addition.

Issues that need Urgent Attention: We ask the UPND government to urgently attend to the following issues:

- **Sanity in the mining sector:** bring back sanity and order in the mining sector, develop a country mining vision urgently and revise the mines policy and also the mines and minerals act. These should provide for the benefit of local communities and Zambia while encouraging **Lack of natural resource account** – let’s learn from past Governments, let’s create a resource fund whose main aim will be to cushion any price reduction in metal prices and also to provide for reserves for future generations. We cannot continue consuming revenues from the natural resources like there is no tomorrow or future generations; let’s not be selfish; let’s keep some resources for the future generation. Other parts of Zambia should not be mined now but in the future.
- **Accountability of the Mukula exports-** We need not remind the Government that Zambia still awaits a report on the financials on the Mukula logging and transactions that have happened over the past 7 years. One year later, we still don't have an account of the Mukula trees and the proceeds of the sales and exports that happened before the Government came into power. A lot of illegal logging and exports of this precious commodity happened.
- **Access to information Law** Access to information bill has been pending for the past 10 plus years. The Government needs to enact this bill as one of the pillars to promote accountability in the country. This was supposed to be the first priority to give hope to the citizens as promised for people to enjoy.
- **Road map on constitutional reforms** - The government should agree with stakeholders for a clear road map and timeframe for constitutional, reform. We expected that this would be done in the first 100 days of government as this is an urgent matter.
- **The Farmer Input Support Programme (FISP)** which has resulted in huge profits for big companies as opposed to the intended beneficiaries. As a result of this, a huge

budgetary allocation of money goes towards the purchase of fertilizer and hybrid seeds leaving very little for extension services, training or research and development. While Zambia is signatory to various international standards such as the Maputo Declarations which state that member countries allocate 10% of the National budgets towards

Embracing Agro ecology Agriculture, the 2022 national budget allocation towards Agriculture stood at 3.7%. This is despite government increasing budget allocation towards all expenditure functions. We urge government to urgently adopt Agro ecology. Embracing Agro ecology will help to make a shift from chemical intensive industrial agriculture to ecologically intensive organic farming which will benefit the small scale farmers who are the majority as reported in the 2021/2022 Crop Focus Survey. The agriculture sector has not received recruitment of new extension officers, as such, there is also an urgent need to recruit extension officers as this will help in addressing the extension officer-farmer ratio.

In collaboration with other Civil Society organisations, Churches, and other non-state actors, we are carefully monitoring your promises to the people and the ones made during the campaigns. We will hold you to them with fearless honesty. That is the least we can offer as patriots.

Sincerely,

Fr Dr Mapulanga
Caritas Zambia – Executive Director