

**STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION TO RE-LAUNCH THE OASIS FORUM, 3rd APRIL
HELD AT THE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN ZAMBIA (CCZ), LUSAKA**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Members of the public will recall that in 2001, the Council Of Churches In Zambia (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship Of Zambia (EFZ), the Law Association Of Zambia (LAZ), the Non-governmental Organization Coordinating Council (NGOCC) and the Zambia Conference Of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB) formerly Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC), deemed it is necessary, expedient, imperative, and desirable to collaborate in defense of constitutionalism in the republic by coming together as **THE OASIS FORUM**.

CCZ, EFZ, LAZ, NGOCC and ZCCB still continue to **RECOGNIZE** the importance of constitutionalism, rule of law and good governance as key tenets for national development so as to uplift the collective welfare of the Zambian citizens.

WE ARE CONVINCED that continued collaboration in the defense of constitutionalism in the republic remains necessary, expedient, imperative, and desirable;

AND THEREFORE, GATHERED today to announce the RE-LAUNCH of the oasis forum.

The oasis forum, as re-launched, shall be a consortium of the legal profession, the church and civil society organizations for the advancement of constitutionalism, rule of law and good governance in the republic of Zambia. It is our firm belief collectively that constitutionalism, the rule of law and good governance remain central to the collective progress of our country and for the upliftment of the welfare of our people. It is for this reason that article 8 of the constitution of Zambia (amendment) no. 2 of 2016 names constitutionalism and good governance among our national values and principles, while the rule of law is named as the anchor of any exercise of executive authority under article 91 of the Constitution.

As the oasis forum we are saddened to note that over the years the constitution making process has been hijacked by narrow partisan interests to the detriment of citizens, and the nation at large. Zambia urgently needs a durable constitution that will stand the test of time. Despite being a signatory to various international treaties, Zambia does not have the expanded Bill of Rights included in the republican constitution. The expanded bill of rights as stated is important for the wellbeing of our people.

Zambia needs to guarantee rights that will begin to uplift the living standards of the majority of our people, especially the most vulnerable. The doctrine of Constitutionalism demands that a government's authority is determined by a constitution which is developed by the consensus of the citizens and is reflective of their collective aspirations.

We are therefore concerned by the lack of a road map from the new dawn government on the constitution making process. We hold firm the belief that the rule of law and not the rule of men is the cornerstone for any flourishing democracy. As such, for the rule of law to be effective, there must be equality under the law, transparency of law, an independent judiciary and access to legal remedy. The rule of law is fundamental to the development, peace and prosperity of our society and its citizens.

With regards to good governance, central to this concept is the requirement that governance is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, efficient and equitable. Good governance assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard.

It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society. We note the enactment of the access to information law as a means to enhance transparency and accountability. However, we bemoan the lack of inclusivity as espoused by the low number of women, youths and persons with disability in the governance of our country. We urge the government to actualize article 259 and 231 of the current constitution to enhance the participation of women and other vulnerable groups.

As the oasis forum, we believe constitutionalism, rule of law and good governance remain critical to our collective progress as a nation. We therefore commit to do everything within the law to advance and advocate for constitutionalism, the rule of law and good governance in the republic of Zambia. We shall speak, collaborate, advocate, and do whatever is required to ensure the country reaps the benefit of these tenets.

In conclusion, we demand a clear road map on the constitution making process from the new dawn administration. The roadmap should include a stand-alone national referendum so that the expanded bill of rights is part of the Republican Constitution.

SIGNED:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-------|
| 1. Bishop Andrew Mwenda | EFZ | |
| 2. Ms. Grace M. Sinkamba | NGOCC | |
| 3. Rev. Emmanuel Chikoya | CCZ | |
| 4. Fr. Francis Mukosa | ZCCB | |
| 5. Mr. Lungisani Zulu | LAZ | |

WE THANK YOU