
CARITAS ZAMBIA STATEMENT ON THE NEED FOR GENUINE AND INCLUSIVE NATIONAL DIALOGUE

Status of the National Dialogue

Caritas Zambia is concerned that there is confusion concerning the much talked about national dialogue since the involvement of ZCID in the equation. While the nation was anxiously waiting for the beginning of talks as organized and arranged by the Commonwealth, another process was being propped up and spearheaded by ZCID. Suddenly we were told that Zambians don't want talks to be led by "foreigners" but "our own organisation" in the name of ZCID. Caritas finds this argument strange, especially that when the Commonwealth came into Zambia to lobby for the release of the UPND President nobody called them "foreigners". After all, Zambia is a bona fide member of the Commonwealth. When Professor Gambari began preparing for a road map for this dialogue, he met all the key stakeholders and requested for the formation of a steering committee composed of key representatives from UPND, PF, CSOs and the Church mother bodies. We wonder what has happened to this process. Why is there now, a pull between those who support the Commonwealth led process and those who support the ZCID led process?

The Root Cause of the Problem

It must be stated that the root cause of the tension that has continued in Zambia since the 2016 elections leading up to the arrest of HH, the declaration of threatened state of emergency and the efforts that were made to resolve the conflict, is still alive today. It has become latent but can spring into life if nothing is done to resolve it. Arising from the post Elections Reports of the United Nations in Zambia, the EU Observer Mission, Christian Churches Monitoring Group (CCMG) and others, Zambia has not taken any keen interest to respond to the recommendations contained in these reports. Some of the major recommendations among many include:

- The removal of overly restrictive limitations of freedom of assembly in the Public Order Act.
- Shortening of the notice period required for public campaign events, and respecting the principle of notification as opposed to permission in accordance with the May 2016 judgment of the Supreme Court.

- The ECZ should rely less on local government officials and local administrative structures and exert greater direct management over all aspects of the electoral process.
- The results management system (RMS) should be assessed for accuracy, timeliness and transparency, following which a revised operational plan for the RMS should be introduced.

Failure to deal with root causes of conflicts such as these creates undesirable consequences that may take long to resolve. Zambia will do well to go back to these issues and deal with them one by one.

The National Democracy Stakeholders' Summit

While we appreciate the effort that has been made by ZCID to hold what they called the National Democracy Summit for Stakeholders, we are of the strong view that this should not and must not replace the Commonwealth initiative. While the Commonwealth initiative is aimed at dealing with specific issues emanating from the 2016 elections and the subsequent arrest of the UPND leader, the ZCID summit is being organized based on the "*desire to promote dialogue as a mechanism to influence policy decisions and reforms among government actors and stakeholder*".¹ We are aware that this ZCID led summit is aimed at providing and facilitating a platform for stakeholders and political actors to consult each other and reach a common understanding on identified issues related to national dialogue. That is why we are of the view that this summit should not be confused with the Commonwealth led national dialogue. As can be seen, the two have different objectives, unless there is a hidden motive to circumvent the Commonwealth led initiative by the ZCID.

Furthermore, some key stakeholders such as the Church Mother Bodies, CSOs and Opposition political parties have expressed their reservations with regard to the lack of capacity, track record and impartiality of ZCID. These reservations have been confirmed by the fact the three Church Mother Bodies, the UPND and several other CSOs shunned the ZCID led summit.

The Value of Commonwealth Facilitated Dialogue

We appeal to all peace loving Zambians not to underrate the ability of the Commonwealth to manage and transform such complicated conflicts. We must realise

¹ ZCID 2018 invitation letter to Stakeholders



Caritas
Zambia

Zambia Episcopal Conference
P.O. Box 31965, Kapingila House, Plot 60,
Kabulonga Road, Lusaka, Zambia
Tel: 260-211-260980/261789
Fax: 260-211-260950
www.ccjdp.org.zm

that Zambia, as the Catholic Bishops observed in April 2017, is still polarized. So, we should try hard not to take actions that further divide the nation. The current situation may please others who benefit from it but time will come when all of us will have to answer for what we have done or failed to do. We are convinced that ZCID, which is an organisation of political parties, cannot ably mediate between two of its members who are in conflict, especially when one of them is the party in government. The power play between them will be beyond the moderation of the current ZCID leadership on this matter arising from the disputed 2016 election results.

Role of the Church

As has been stated many times before, the Church Mother Bodies, CCZ, EFZ and ZCCB stand ready to collaborate with all key stakeholders in the nation and lead it into a genuine process of dialogue and reconciliation which is anchored on truth and Justice. We are of the considered view that the Church has not only the moral authority but also the convening power, needed impartiality and the undisputed track-record of mediating national political conflicts.

Call for inclusiveness in national discourse

It is our considered view that as a nation, we have lamentably failed to robustly address a number of recurrent snags including those that stem from our previous elections. The tendency of moving on and dragging along people, who are aggrieved as if nothing happened, does not help to unite the country. The wrong notion that political competition is aimed at annihilating or totally silencing political opponents at all costs and by all means available is the root cause of intra and interparty intolerance and violence. As believers in a democratic dispensation that cherishes parliamentary democracy we would like to build and consolidate on our demands for respect for divergent views and for the rights of individuals and political parties to organise, associate and assemble without any undue restrictions and intimidation. We are again disappointed when we see the events leading to the recent by elections and reports of violence from the Chilanga constituency. It is like re-living the pre-election period of 2016! How many times will we call upon the police to take charge of the situation in a professional, objective and non-partisan manner?



Caritas
Zambia

Zambia Episcopal Conference
P.O. Box 31965, Kapingila House, Plot 60,
Kabulonga Road, Lusaka, Zambia
Tel: 260-211-260980/261789
Fax: 260-211-260950
www.ccjdp.org.zm

Conclusion

We call on all well-meaning Zambians to participate in actions that will help to bring Zambia back to the correct trajectory, where human rights are truly respected, transparency and accountability is cherished, poor people especially small scale farmers are protected from displacements, the integrity of creation is respected and all people in Zambia are treated equally. The use of force and intimidation are not the solution to Zambia's numerous problems. Only genuine, sincere and inclusive dialogue aimed at national reconciliation is the long-term solution. This reconciliation itself must be firmly rooted in the Christian values of **Truth, Mercy, Justice and Peace**.

Signed

Eugene Kabilika
Executive Director

Issued to the Press on Friday the Seventh Week of Easter 18th May, 2018