



A PRESS STATEMENT BY THE THREE CHURCH MOTHER BODIES ON NATIONAL DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION

1. Preamble

We the leaders of the three Church Mother Bodies in Zambia, namely: the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ) and the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB), greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we embark on this difficult journey of leading the entire nation into a process of national dialogue and reconciliation, we are compelled by the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14) to speak to you on critical matters relating to the preparation and management of the much talked about national dialogue and reconciliation process in our country. For us, every effort that promotes a non-violent method of transforming conflicts such as dialogue is a moment of grace and an opportunity for self-appraisal as a nation and a call for the conversion of hearts. In our view this is not an **INTERPARTY** dialogue, it is a **NATIONAL** and an all-inclusive dialogue seeking genuine national transformation of hearts, governance systems and procedures in order to promote unity, respect for human rights and peace for all.

2. Our Prophetic Voice

We have always said that our prophetic voice on national issues is solely motivated by our wish to promote national unity and a just society where people live in peace with the Lord, with one another and creation. This is our motivation even as we embark on leading this national dialogue and reconciliation.

3. Lessons from Our Past Engagements

We are **CONFIDENT** because we draw valuable lessons from our historical engagements in all the sectors of human development beyond political dialogue. We the three Church Mother Bodies have been working in the socio-economic and political life of this nation, complimenting the work of successive governments in such areas as education, health, skills training, civic and voter education, to mention but a few. By keeping our doors open, we have been influencing government policies to better the lives of our people and promote peace and unity in our country.

We have always been available to help the country overcome moments of political crises. In 1991 for instance, we managed to bring Dr. Kenneth Kaunda of UNIP and Dr. Frederick Chiluba to a round table and facilitated a dialogue meeting at the Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Cross, an action that resulted into Zambia returning to a multiparty dispensation without bloodshed.

In addition, we also learnt lessons from facilitating a political dialogue at the Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Cross on 29th March 2016. As you may all be aware, this meeting was organized in order to respond to the many electoral and human rights challenges that troubled the nation during the campaign period then. We believe that the peace accord brokered in that dialogue should have marked a new beginning. However, our leaders across the political divide, failed to abide by the very commitments they made to end political violence, misapplication of the Public Order Act and electoral malpractices. Because of this failure, the country is in this state of political division and socio-economic decline.

The other important lesson we can draw from the past is the impact of our pastoral statement of 16th June 2017 where we demanded for an all-inclusive national dialogue. This, as you may all be aware, led the Church Mother bodies, to facilitate a proxy dialogue between Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, who was then in detention, and the Republican President. This single event triggered the need for national dialogue which began to take shape following the intervention of the Commonwealth and eventual release of Mr. Hichilema and his colleagues.

4. Status of the Dialogue and Reconciliation Process

We are **AWARE**, of the immense expectations and anxieties that have gripped some sections of the Zambian society over the past few days regarding the status of the dialogue process and what the three Church Mother Bodies have been doing since the collapse of the Commonwealth led dialogue in 2017. There has been numerous media statements and pronouncements, questioning

the role of the three Church Mother Bodies in the process. However, we are encouraged by many credible stakeholders who have endorsed our role in leading and facilitating the national dialogue and reconciliation process.

We wish to inform the nation that our silence on this process was deliberate. We have used these past months to discern, reflect and make consultations with some stakeholders, which included ZCID. From these consultations, which are still ongoing, we hope to have the **National Dialogue and Reconciliation Framework** endorsed by all political parties and other stakeholders including the general citizenry. This consultation cannot and should not be done through the media and neither do we subscribe to the demonization and deliberate exclusion of any section of the Zambian society who are key stakeholders in this process. We the three Church mother Bodies desire to lay a pre-dialogue foundation that is respected and acceptable to all key protagonists in this process.

5. Our Appeal

- 5.1. Media:** We regard the media as critical stakeholders in contributing to a fruitful and genuine national dialogue and reconciliation process. We therefore call upon media houses to refrain from sensationalism and polarization of the people and political institutions.

We want to see a media that is professional by reporting truthfully, objectively and factually as they inform the public. We want to see a media landscape that is impartial. Whichever media platform one uses, should not fuel hate speech or insults in the name of the right to freely express oneself.

- 5.2. Political Leaders:** We call upon all political leaders to think and act beyond their partisan interests and show leadership as we embark on this process. Remember that every leadership has its defining moment, "...and who knows that you came to the royal position for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14b).

- 5.3. Civil Society Organisations:** We also recognize the critical role that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have always played in such situations. We therefore call upon all CSOs to play their important role in educating, organising and mobilising the public to understand and actively participate in the national dialogue leading to a reconciled nation.

- 5.4. The Church and other Faith Based Organisations (FBOs):** We repeat the appeal we made in our statement immediately after the 2016

elections, that all members of our churches and other FBOs continue being instruments of peace and reconciliation in the nation by avoiding any manner of speech and conduct that can deepen the levels of division, suspicion and disunity. As Christians we must always strive to be **the salt of the earth and the light of the world** (Mtt 5:13). Let us then carry out our God-given mandate as **“ambassadors of reconciliation”** (2Cor 5:20).

6. Conclusion

We the three Church Mother Bodies are **RESOLVED** to continue the work we have already started, finalising the Framework for a genuine National Dialogue and Reconciliation and a clear roadmap in readiness for its launch and implementation.

As indicated in our joint statement of 8th January 2018, **“true dialogue means a conversion of heart, attitude and behaviour. It is a project, an ongoing process and effort. It is the way of life for us Christians.”** As we commit ourselves to preaching messages of love and reconciliation across the political divide, we expect the faithful to support all our efforts.

Finally, we **LOOK FORWARD** to serious commitment from **ALL** stakeholders and we call upon them to remain focused to the entire process.

We, **ON OUR PART**, are full of hope for a successful national dialogue and reconciliation process and remain committed to this noble cause.

God bless Zambia

May God Bless you

Signed



Bishop George C.Z. Lungu
(ZCCB President)



Bishop Alfred Kalemba
(CCZ President)



Bishop Paul Mususu
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Given to the Media on 26th August 2018