INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY PRESS RELEASE

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ITS TIME TO ENHANCE SOCIAL JUSTICE & RESTORE THE DIGNITY OF THE 6.2MILLION ZAMBIANS LEAVING IN POVERTY

The Civil Society for Poverty Reduction today joins the rest of the world to commemorate the 2017 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, under the theme “Answering the Call of October 17 to end poverty: A Path Toward Peaceful and Inclusive Societies”

Zambia today is a country characterized by high poverty and growing inequality in the midst of plenty. Today, we should remind ourselves that 40.8% poor Zambians out of an estimated population of 15 million, have been left behind and excluded economically, socially and indeed politically amidst economic and technological advancements made by the country in the last 10 years. Many of which still leave below K10 a day! where three meals a day is considered a luxury, the thought of a better tomorrow is merely a dream and the vicious cycle of poverty continue to haunt generations, whilst a few inherit wealth, the majority of our people inherit poverty. Successive governments have failed to significantly reduce poverty and we say that it’s time we restored the dignity of our people and ensure that truly no one is left behind.

The biggest success of the 7th National Development Plan will be the extent to which we reduce poverty by ensuring resources we spend on poverty reduction programs reach those furthest and isolated from the ongoing social and economic development.

We need to realize that what we have been doing in the past has not worked and time has come to remodel our thinking towards strategies for poverty eradication. As a starting point, apart from relying on surveys for decision making, government must involve the poorest and most vulnerable directly, through the re-enforced 7NDP Institutional arrangements, when arriving at both policy and budgeting priorities. We can no longer view the poor in our society as mere beneficiaries of handouts or disempowered recipients of public services. No one else knows better the challenges the poor face than the poor themselves, as they are at the forefront of fighting poverty on a daily basis.

On the 25th Anniversary of this Commemoration, CSPR re-emphasizes the promotion of social justice and realization that a nation’s greatest asset are its people and that every life matters and no should be left behind.
With this in mind we reiterate our call on government to effectively implement the poverty reduction programs as prescribed in our 7th NDP. We further call on government among other measures to undertake the following:

i. Timely disbursements of pro-poor funds to Ministries, Provinces and Spending Agencies

ii. Support both state and citizen actors who are re-enforcing national accountability efforts to ensure that we spend our resources prudently and also that the public gets its value for every ngwee and kwacha we spend on both public goods and services;

iii. Reduce government borrowing and manage the current public debt and further invest in strategies for effective and equitable domestic revenue mobilization mechanism in the country. It is disturbing that for every K5 that we will be spending next year, K1 will go towards financing Debt Repayment according to the 2018 National Budget, money which could have been spent on poverty reduction programs such as education or health!” Failure to manage our debt will further reduce the fiscal space as observed in the 2018 budget and crowd out any future tangible investment for the poor.

iv. We further urge government to consider implementing universal social protection programs for all Zambians both in terms of contributory and non-contributory mechanisms so that every citizen has social security and can leave a life of dignity.

In conclusion, as we commemorate the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty and as we convene tomorrow for the National Day of Prayers, Restoration and Reconciliation, we should take a deep reflection on how excluded and humiliated the poor are in our society, because its undeniable that poverty is an injustice. All Citizens have a duty to the development of our country and to ensure we eliminate poverty and be each other’s keepers. Let’s consider the impact of our actions on society and poor. To our political leaders ruling and opposition, we only have one Zambia, we need to ensure that our politics are of value to the woman and child on the street trying to make earns meat. Let politics be about service and not self-preservation and wealth accumulation at the expense of the citizen you claim to represent or want to represent. It’s time to develop Zambia, eradicate poverty and restore the dignity of our people!

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CSPR is a civil society anti-poverty advocacy network working for pro-poor development in Zambia whose vision is; “A Zambia where its citizens are empowered and have access to all basic needs”