Civil Society for Poverty Reduction

For Immediate Release

CHILD FOCUSED PRESS STATEMENT BY THE CIVIL SOCIETY FOR POVERTY REDUCTION AND MEDIA NETWORK FOR CHILD RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT CHILD PARLIAMENTARIANS ON THE DAY OF THE 2018 AFRICAN CHILD

Date: 16th June, 2018; Venue: CSPR Zambia Head Offices

Presented by the Child Parliamentarians

GOOD MORNING; Members of the Press, Civil Society Organisations and Fellow Children

Welcome to the Child Parliamentarians Media Briefing on this Day when we as a Country and the rest of the African Continent Commemorate ‘Day of the African Child’. This year in Zambia we are commemorating it under the Theme ‘Leaving No Child Behind in Zambia’s Development’

Since its adoption by the African Union, this day is one of the most significant events on the African Calendar because it puts most nations and communities in a position of deep reflection and consideration on how sustainable Africa’s future is.

Governments across the continent have made several commitments to take the necessary steps to ensure that the African child grows up in an
environment where they are protected, they can develop and survive as well as be heard with respect.

As Zambian children, we appreciate efforts being made by our parents or guardians and that of course includes from the homes where we are coming from, our communities and the government. This year’s theme has the same message as that of the 7th National Development Plan (7NDP), “Accelerating Development towards Vision 2030 without Leaving Anyone Behind”. Indeed, if one was to make the Vision 2030 a reality, they should first start with addressing our needs; US, the Future; or US, the real owners of Vision 2030.

However, the various forms of child rights violations we as children see and experience in our communities is a different picture from what our policies, laws, and development plans aim to achieve.

Problems such as:

1. Lack of access to quality education; too many pupils and very few teachers and poor children unable to reach secondary school as well as go to college or university because they cannot afford.
2. Poor and non-responsive Health Services, especially sexual reproductive health services which have failed to address the high teenage pregnancies;
3. High malnutrition levels due to poor food and nutrition security in the country;
4. Exclusion of children in decision making such as absence of child consultations on the national and District development plans as well as budgets; This has made most Zambian Budgets to be poorly child focused. But it also violates the Zambian child’s right to participation.
5. Early child marriages; which is even a taboo that our society can call these gross violations of the child’s right and dignity as “MARRIAGES’.
For our country to really show its seriousness and commitment to making this year’s theme of **Leaving no Child Behind** as well as that of the 7th national Development Plan and the Child Policy we must ensure that **Every Last child counts.** Therefore;

- The government must demonstrate this through the 2019 National Budget by improving how much money they allocate to child focused sectors such as education, health, social protection, water and sanitation and culture and recreation facilities.
- Everyone must take up their responsibility in making sure that they contribute to reducing the number of street kids in Zambia.
- The Ministry of Education and other NGOs must also support Child Rights Clubs in Schools by at least giving them some money to run their affairs.
- We also thank the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development for organizing the **Day of the African Child Conference** which was at Government Complex held 2 days ago. We therefore ask that other organisations also copy what the Ministry did by having such platforms such as the Children’s Parliament at the Provincial and District Level.
- Fighting early child marriages must also be seen in our communities not just being talked about by the government and members of parliament. It is everyone’s duty to ensure that a child’s future is not ruined by such cruel marriage arrangements.
- The Media must also accord equal space to children on developmental matters.

These submissions we have also been made to both Ministry of Finance, Budgets Office and our guardian Ministry of Youth, Sport and Child Development, the Children’s Department. We will further follow up with them during the National Children’s Parliament in September this year.
Please take time to embrace and protect every child you meet today by ensuring that they fulfill their various rights which they are entitled to.

Thank you all for coming.