



PRESS RELEASE

9th September, 2021

CIVIL SOCIETY FOR POVERTY REDUCTION EXPECTATIONS FROM THE PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS AND OPENING OF THE THIRTEENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA

Civil Society for Poverty Reduction congratulates the 150 Members of Parliament who were elected in the 2021 General Elections and have been successfully sworn in. Our heartfelt congratulations go to the first Female Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia Honourable Nelly Mutti, MP who was elected by the House along with her deputies.

As His excellency, the President of the Republic of Zambia, Mr. Hakainde Hichilema is set to address the Nation through parliament during the ceremonial opening of the Thirteenth National Assembly of Zambia this Friday, 10th September 2021, CSPR is confident that the President will address important national development issues that need urgent attention and key to spurring economic and human development.

Over the last 5 years, Zambia's economic growth has been hampered by various factors such as the Covid 19 pandemic, high inflation, depreciating currency, and increased debt servicing costs. General Prices in the country have been rising; Statistics from Zambia Statistical Agency (ZAMSTATS) indicate that the annual inflation for August 2021 stands at a double digit of 24.4%, while the kwacha has lately appreciated against the dollar at K16.12 per 1 USD. Poverty and Inequality remain stubbornly high with more than half of the population being unable meet their basic needs. The unchecked increase in the cost of living has eroded the purchasing power of household incomes, giving rise increased vulnerability among the urban poor.

CSPR (Civil Society for Poverty Reduction) expects the President to bring a message of hope which speaks to the above pertinent issues, particularly how the government plans to steer the economy towards recovery for poverty reduction.

Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) is a network of Civil Society Organizations working around transparency, social accountability, and pro-poor policy advocacy. Part of our mandate is to coordinate and consolidate the quality of civic input in the formulation and implementation of pro-poor policies and programmes such as the National Budget and the National Development Plans.

Therefore, we expect the President to highlight his government's strategies and plans regarding Economic Management and Job Creation, Governance and Civic Space and Sustainable Human and Social Development as follows:

- **Economic Management and Job Creation:** In order to enhance economic recovery and create employment for the youth we expect the Republican President to provide policy direction on:
- Harmonization of laws that are required to open and register a company – there are too many laws and regulations involved in opening and registering a business. These laws should favour both Zambians and non-Zambians who would like to venture into businesses.

- Legal reforms with regards to debt contraction, transparency, and utilization.
- Amend the Mines and Minerals Development Act to reinstate a clause which embraces mineral sharing mechanisms between the central government and local government authorities.
- Diversification into key sectors like agriculture instead of heavy reliance on the mining sector. We expect the government to enhance the agriculture sector crop diversification and through value addition and industrialization.
- **Governance and Civic Space:** To enhance democratic governance and improve citizens freedoms of expression, association, and assembly, we anticipate the Republican President to provide policy direction on the following:
 - Public Service Reforms to promote autonomy, professionalism, and integrity in public institutions, including the separation of powers to ensure that the three arms of government operate independently. In addition, there's need for laws that stipulate how political parties are funded, thereby adhering to transparency.
 - Consider improving the performance of Ministers, by exploring the appointment of the cabinet outside National Assembly. This should not be an immediate measure but should be a consideration in the future.
 - Media reforms to improve the operating environment for media institutions especially through the enactment of the Access to Information Bill.
 - Amendment of the Public Order Act and Review of the Non-Government Organisation Act (NGO-Act).
 - Policy direction on the full implementation of the Decentralisation policy, especially fiscal decentralization, so that the local authorities are not only given the mandate to manage government affairs but are also supported with resources to do that.
- **Sustainable Human and Social Development:** In order to improve living conditions and reduce poverty among poor and vulnerable Zambians, we expect the Republican President to address the following:
 - Policy direction on the enactment of the Child Code Bill and the Social Protection Bill
 - Operationalization and utilisation of health infrastructure by procurement of more drugs, recruitment of adequate medical personnel and buying of equipment. In addition, the government should explore means of utilizing the mobile hospitals which have remained dormant even with millions of public funds being spent on them.
 - Bring sanity in the procurement of health-related products. This should be extended to all forms of procurement in public institutions to curb fraud and corruption and increase value for public resources as well as restore public confidence in government institutions.
 - Finalisation of the review of the National Social Protection Policy and introduction of effective Policies that are pro-poor and help enhance the living standards for Zambians. Even though the economy is in distress, the government should not neglect the poor who survive through Social Protection Programs, by ensuring that funding for these critical sectors is ringfenced.
 - Progress update on the formulation of the 8th National Development Plan given the proposed alignment of the draft Plan to the UPND Manifesto and when the Plan will be launched as the 7NDP comes to an end.
 - Ringfencing of revenues generated from the mines so that they are invested in Agriculture and social sectors such as Education and Health.
 - Institutionalization of Climate Change responses in all government institutions and programmes.

CSPR will work with National Assembly of Zambia and the newly appointed Cabinet to advance inclusiveness and transparency in the implementation of poverty reduction programmes as well as strengthen the capacity of oversight institutions.

Issued by Civil Society for Poverty Reduction

Since 2000 the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction has ensured that civil society effectively and meaningfully participates in the design, formulation, and implementation of the National Development Plans (NDPs) and further monitor the NDPs to ensure government provides a means by which citizens can effectively influence pro-poor policies.

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