



Press Statement

CCMG Pre-Election Environment Observations

18th June 2021

All Protocols Observed
Friends from the Media
Ladies and gentlemen,

Zambia is mourning the founding Father of the Nation, Dr. Kenneth David Kaunda. He fought for the liberation of not only Zambia from colonial rule but many other countries in southern Africa and beyond. Aged ninety-seven (97), he has died as a statesman, a hero and a legend. The Christian Churches Monitoring Group (CCMG) therefore joins the nation in saluting and applauding Dr. Kaunda for establishing this nation on the motto of “One Zambia – One Nation” and for making Zambia an Oasis and Beacon of Peace. We convey our heartfelt and prayerful condolences to the bereaved family and the nation at large.

In addition, Zambians are mourning their dear ones who are succumbing to COVID-19 in numbers. At the outset, CCMG wishes to again call upon all well-meaning Zambians, including government leaders as well as all political leaders, to lead by example in adhering to the public health regulations.

Further, the nation is not only mourning KK and our dear ones, but also bleeding. This is due to the ugly events of politically motivated violence witnessed in several parts of the country. We also bemoan the continued trend of tribal remarks being uttered by well-known political figures and the unlawful activities such as buying of voters cards. Certainly, this is not the Zambia our fallen heroes, including KK, fought for and wished to leave behind. CCMG therefore believes that the mourning period is an opportune moment to do some soul-searching as a country. We also call upon all political players to commit and pursue the path of genuine dialogue aimed at reconciling the nation and ensure that we have free, fair, credible and peaceful elections.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the period under review, CCMG, through 330 long-term observers placed in all constituencies, has observed a number of incidents that have either limited the democratic and elections campaign space or promoted our democratic dispensation. These include:

1. Police Conduct

CCMG noted several troubling aspects of police conduct during this election period under review. From the time the campaign period began until the announcement of the suspension of mass rallies, CCMG observers reported seven (7) political party meetings that were prevented or stopped by police citing COVID-19 measures. This action disproportionately affected UPND, with 6 out of 7 instances recorded. Furthermore, since the campaign period began, five (5) party meetings were prevented or stopped by police for reasons that were not given. This action disproportionately affected the UPND, with 4 out of 5 instances recorded.

Of particular concern were four (4) incidents where excessive force, that is, either tear gas or bullets were fired by police since our observation began in March. All these incidents involved UPND except one where both PF and UPND were involved. In Ndola our monitors observed that the police blocked the UPND party president for several hours from attending a funeral. As if this was not enough, on 6th June our monitors reported that Police allegedly fired shots at citizens in a bid to disperse the crowd as the UPND party president was trying to attend a church service.

All of these actions by the police contributed to the limiting of campaign space for political parties and contributed to the widening of an unlevel political playing field.

In addition to these incidents, our CCMG observers noted a discrepancy in the provision of police security to PF party activities versus that provided to UPND and other parties. Twenty-five percent (25%) of PF activities, twenty percent (20%) of UPND activities and nineteen percent (19%) of other parties' activities. This was observed since the campaign period began. There have also been multiple incidents of destruction of political party campaign material including billboards



which our monitors have recorded. However, the police have not concluded investigating these acts and they have been going on unabated even though culprits are known. Slowness in curbing this situation has already resulted in violence as was witnessed in Mpulungu.

We believe that the police have a primary responsibility to protect and promote human rights and should not in any way be the ones violating them. Such acts by the police observed by our monitors during this period, could potentially worsen political violence which can result in loss of lives and damage to property.

2. Suspension of Political Campaign Rallies

The Christian Churches Monitoring Group would like to caution those charged with the responsibility to ensure adherence to COVID-19 guidelines to do so without violating people's rights, such as the right to association, assembly and expression. Ladies and gentlemen, political participation is premised around one's ability to fully exercise these rights to the extent that they do not violate another person's freedoms. CCMG therefore calls on the Ministry of Health, ECZ and Zambia Police to enforce such guidelines as provided without fear or favor. Any attempt or show of selective enforcement of these guidelines will undermine the principle of equality before the law and could potentially create an uneven playing field for political participation.

We believe that Zambia missed an opportunity to carry out mass sensitization to get the population wearing masks. Political rallies that have been banned could have provided that opportunity. All the political parties could have been tasked to ensure that all their supporters and those attending their rallies were masked up and venues where such rallies were to take place could easily have been disinfected before the event. The roadshows that were allowed were actually dangerous because they carried the virus from one street to the other. After the ban on rallies and road-shows is lifted, CCMG proposes a return to the rallies rather than door to door and road shows.

We further urge all political parties, when campaigns resume, to conduct their activities in a manner that does not pose threats to public health as it relates to the spread of COVID-19. CCMG



also calls on the government, including the President and the Vice President, to limit these public activities to the greatest extent possible in view of reducing the spread of COVID-19 and to avoid the ruling party having an unfair advantage over other political parties, especially this time when the campaign period is suspended. In particular, all parts of the national government should abide by the Secretary to the Cabinet's 27 May circular, which indicates that travel outside of the Province are suspended without express permission from his office.

CCMG observers will continue monitoring both the application of the suspension of campaign rallies and public government activities going forward and will report on any instances where unfair application of the suspension and any unfair advantage taken in the guise of monitoring and inspecting government projects.

3. Media Coverage

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Elections put to test Press Freedoms and helps to determine whether journalists and the media are able to operate freely without intimidation or harassment and also be able to make independent opinions on the elections and the electoral processes without fear or favor. We are cognizant of efforts by other CSOs in trying to promote safety and security of Journalists as well as enhancing Police/Media relations. These efforts must be commended and that the Police should ensure the safety of journalists before, during and after elections.

However, CCMG is concerned with unbalanced media coverage of candidates contrary to provisions of the Electoral Code of Conduct 7 (a). Several instances of unbalanced media coverage of candidates by public media were observed and highlighted in the MISA Zambia media monitoring report. On 10th June, the Ndola High Court directed ECZ to prescribe the amount of airtime in public media to be allocated to all the participating parties. As the campaign period has already begun, CCMG calls on the ECZ to urgently abide by the court order and engage the public media to allocate equal access to public media by all parties and candidates. Access to media in the electoral process is important because it helps to a greater extend, level the playing field in the light of restricted physical campaign activities as a result of COVID-19.



4. Traditional Authorities and Church Leaders

Traditional leaders are the heads of traditional establishments and they should be non-partisan because they represent the affairs of people with different opinions, views and interests. Since the campaign period began, CCMG's reports have documented sixteen (16) instances of traditional leaders declaring public support for parties or candidates, with fourteen (14) supporting PF and two (2) supporting UPND. The endorsements have the potential to exert undue influence on their subjects and are contrary to section 15(i) of the Electoral Code of Conduct.

Equally CCMG reports have documented seven (7) instances of church leaders declaring support for parties or candidates, with five (5) supporting PF and (2) supporting UPND since the campaign period began. In the same spirit, we believe such acts could exert undue influence on their congregants. The Church has a role of unifying communities and not causing divisions driven by their preferences. We therefore call on Traditional Authorities and Church Leaders to desist from making such declarations as they contravene the Electoral Code of Conduct.

5. Politically-Motivated Violence and Related Acts

Politically-motivated violence has become a disturbingly familiar aspect of Zambian elections and one that threatens to destroy our nation's reputation as peaceful and do permanent damage to our hard won national unity. Since the campaign period began, CCMG's reports have documented thirteen (13) acts of politically-motivated violence, with PF as the main perpetrator in eight (8) instances, UPND as the main perpetrator in two (2) instances, both PF and UPND as the main perpetrators in one (1) instance, and two (2) instances of intra-party violence – one each for PF and UPND. Destruction of campaign materials, which raise political tensions and can lead to violence, is becoming increasingly common during the campaign period. CCMG's reports document eleven (11) such instances, with PF as the main perpetrators in seven (7) instances and our observers unable to identify the main perpetrators in four (4) instances. UPND campaign materials were the target in eight (8) of the 11 instances. In addition to these acts, CCMG observers have documented three (3) instances of arming of party supporters – two (2) by PF



and one (1) by UPND – and nineteen (19) instances of party supporters donning military attire – thirteen (13) by PF supporters and six (6) by UPND supporters.

Many of the incidents of politically-motivated violence and related acts have not resulted in any action by the police and so perpetrators mostly have gone unpunished and those fomenting the violence continue to act with impunity. We note the efforts made by the ECZ to suspend all campaign activities of the PF and UPND in Lusaka, Namwala, Mpulungu and Nakonde districts. This should have been arrived at after dialogue between the two affected parties failed and should have also been accompanied by a robust monitoring system to ensure compliance with the directive by ECZ. This way, the Police will be helped to ensure that anyone in breach of this directive is dealt with and in accordance with the provisions of the law.

6. Inappropriate Use of Government Resources/Personnel

A level playing field is critical to a credible election. Incumbents who misuse government resources and civil servants who take a partisan stand or engage in partisan acts are inappropriately tipping that balance. During the campaign period, CCMG's reports have documented four (4) instances of the use of state vehicles for PF party activities and three (3) instances of the use of government venues for PF party activities, which is a violation of the section 15(k) of the Electoral Code of Conduct. In addition, CCMG's reports have documented four (4) instances of partisan acts by non-elected officials, all of which involved District Commissioners. The partisan acts by public officers is a clear violation of section 2 of the Electoral Code of Conduct.

CCMG calls on all government officials as well as the PF to end immediately the use of government resources and personnel for party purposes and to discipline party or government officials who violate the Electoral Code of Conduct in this manner.

Distinguished guests

Conclusion



Zambia is praised by many people in Africa and indeed in the world as an oasis of peace because, over the years, she has demonstrated strong commitment to democratic principles and processes. Since the advent of multi-party democracy in 1991, peaceful transfer of power necessitated by change of government has taken place and in instances where other political players were not satisfied with the outcome of elections, they peacefully turned to the courts for redress. So far, in all the elections that were petitioned, the decisions of the courts were respected.

While elections are critical in measuring Zambia's Democratic growth, the political landscape has always been characterized by tension, intolerance, shrinking political, media and civic space. Furthermore, since 2011, Zambia has been witnessing increased undemocratic tendencies such as the inhibiting of some candidates, especially from the opposition, to campaign freely during the run-up to elections, lack of impartiality by the police in the way they implement the Public Order Act (POA) and in some cases the use of excessive force. There is also the lack of enforcement of the Electoral Code of Conduct by the ECZ, and increased unbalanced media coverage of political players especially, the state media.

Of late, the private media on the other hand has suffered censorship and in extreme cases closure and suspension of broadcasting licenses, among others, of particular concern to CCMG is the increasing levels of politically motivated violence the country has recently witnessed. Our monitors have recorded incidents of violence which is unfortunate especially that the Country was supposed to show maturity in democracy. While many people including key political players and other Church leaders, have condemned this violence, we would like to say that condemning violence alone is not enough and does not change anything. In fact violence itself feels nothing even if we strongly condemn it because it does not exist on its own. It is the people who plan, and execute this violence against others and their property that should be named, condemned and shamed. In a special way, CCMG would like to directly speak to you the youths who have allowed to arm yourselves with pangas and other offensive weapons. For the sake of peace and unity of our beloved country, we hereby call upon you to declare a cease-fire and surrender all your weapons to the Zambia Police. Let us all use this situation as we mourn the great son of Africa, Dr. Kenneth David Kaunda, by renouncing all manner of violence and seek God's forgiveness.



As stated before, the three Church Mother Bodies, the Council of Churches in Zambia (CCZ), the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ) and the Zambia Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB), remain available and committed to foster peace in the nation, not through prayers but also promoting deliberate initiatives aimed at genuine dialogue among key political stakeholders.

To the sponsors of the youths who have been committing violence by attacking opponents and innocent citizens, we wish to categorically state that you are also guilty of violent conduct. Seek God's face and repent. Your money that has been used to buy pangas and other offensive weapons is maimed and is killing people. We are aware that the Police know these people and yet no arrests have been made. If any arrest is made, it is often the innocent that are put behind bars only to be acquitted by the courts. Why are you (the Zambia Police) afraid of arresting people operating a torture chamber called Kamugodi which many people have been complaining about in Kanyama? How do you tolerate such evil in a nation that calls itself Christian?

Country men and women, time has come for Zambians to occupy their democratic space that has been stolen from them by intolerance, tribalism, hate speech, threats, poverty and violence. We call upon all Zambians to unite in defeating these evils by showing love to one another and in a bid to keep the legacy of Dr. Kenneth David Kaunda, let us all agree to start afresh. We wish to see the public media that fairly covers all political players; we want our youths to turn over all the pangas they have and the funders of violence who purchase these pangas and knives, to buy food for the poor and feed the hungry. To all political leaders, we invite you to come with open minds and hearts to the dialogue table, engage in such a manner so as to reach consensus and ensure that Zambia conducts free, credible, transparent, accountable and peaceful elections.

Finally, CCMG calls on the ECZ, Zambia Police, Ministry of Health and Political Parties to continue engaging in order to find common ground in as far as facilitating equal access to voters through campaigns in which ever form acceptable. Provision of equitable security to all participating parties by the Police should not be relegated to the party security and the so-called commanders. Let Zambians feel safe in the presence of the Police—By the end of the mourning period, let us come back to a new atmosphere that will promote credible elections in Zambia.



May the Soul of the Father of the Nation, KK, rest in internal Peace!

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