

**Statement Read During the Launch of the CCMG 2021 Election Observation Report Held
on 24th March, 2021 at Taj Pamodzi Hotel - Lusaka**

Read by: Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Chikoya- CCMG Steering Committee Chairperson

For Immediate Release

Member of the Christian Churches Monitoring Group (CCMG) Steering Committee,

Cooperating partners,

Representatives of the Three Church Mother Bodies,

Representative of the Zambia Police Service,

Government Officials and Representatives of Government Institutions,

The Acting Executive Director-Caritas Zambia,

Representatives of Political Parties,

Representative of the Electoral Commission of Zambia,

Civil Society Organisations represented here,

The Media

Ladies and Gentlemen, simply all protocols observed;

As a sign of respect let us stand and observe a moment of silence for our 4th Republican President H.E. Mr. Rupiah Bwezani Banda who died 12 March, 2022. We remember the late President as a true son of the soil and for his enduring service to our great nation during his long and illustrious career as a Public Servant and his role in facilitating the transition of power in the immediate past elections.

On August 12, 2021, Zambians went to the polls to cast their votes for President, National Assembly members, Mayors and Council Chairpersons and Local Councilors. The presidential race, which saw 16 candidates vying for the position of Republican President, was highly competitive. On August 14, 2021, the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) announced the final

presidential results in accordance with the law, with the voter turnout reported at 70.61 percent. On August, 16, 2021 CCMG released its Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) results to verify the accuracy of ECZ's official presidential results as a reflection of the ballots cast at polling stations.

Today, the Christian Churches Monitoring Group (CCMG) is proud and pleased to release its comprehensive final election report. Despite the unlevel playing field and the devastating impact of COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 general elections were successful. This report highlights in detail CCMG's comprehensive electoral process monitoring program for the 2021 electoral cycle, both pre and post-election activities, including election day monitoring, boundary delimitation, national mobile issuance of National Registration Cards (NRCs), voter registration, long-term election observation, and a parallel vote tabulation (PVT) on election day. These activities, among others, helped CCMG to achieve its objectives- to strengthen democratic electoral processes and encourage citizen participation in democratic governance in Zambia through non-partisan election monitoring, research and documentation, electoral reforms advocacy and capacity building of civil society organisations in democracy, elections and governance.

Ladies and Gentlemen elections bring to the fore strengths and weaknesses of the country's democracy, for instance the principle of separation of power is tested on whether the Legislature is able to enact laws that support democratic elections or whether the Judiciary is able to litigate electoral related matters in a manner that inspires public confidence without interference of the Executive. The number of election petitions before the courts of law, for example, is a big test for the Judiciary. Elections also test press freedoms, whether journalists and the media are able to operate freely without intimidation and harassment and make independent opinions on elections and electoral processes without fear or favor. The 2021 elections were characterized by harassment and intimidation of journalists, threats of media shutdown and suspension of broadcasting licenses, such as the case of Prime TV.

Furthermore, the implementation of public order laws are equally tested during elections regarding the extent to which such laws promote civic participation and protection of citizens right to access electoral information as well as political parties and candidates' ability to assemble and associate. We noted with concern the poor and selective application of the Public Order Act as well as the disproportionate provision of security to the ruling party versus opposition parties by the Police during campaigns.

As you will see from a presentation of our findings, the 2021 elections were held in a unique context when the country and the world at large was faced with the COVID-19 pandemic which posed a huge challenge on political campaigns due to restrictions set not only by the Ministry of Health Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, the Electoral Commission of Zambia organized and conducted a successful election, and we commend them for that. We also highlighted a number of shortcomings throughout the electoral process, and we make our recommendations to strengthen our democracy, electoral processes and institutions, targeting institutions such as, the Electoral Commission of Zambia, the Zambia Police Service, Civil Society Organisations, Political Parties and the Media. These recommendations are aimed at improving our electoral environment for future elections and the electoral process.

Distinguished Guests, as we launch our report today, whose recommendations align with several other citizen and international observer groups' recommendations, we call on the government to pay particular attention to constitutional and legislative reforms and prioritize those that affect the management of elections. We also call for consensus building on the electoral process, as well as wider consultation with stakeholders in this regard. Our prayer is that the Legislature will equally apply itself on reforms to serve the interest of the people of Zambia irrespective of political party. Time for politicking is over, and we all need to pull together to create a stronger democracy, a democracy that Zambians deserve.

In conclusion, allow me to recognize the support that CCMG continues to receive from Cooperating partners, Civil Society Organisations, Political Parties, the Church, Media, Electoral Commission of Zambia and key government institutions. Allow me to thank in a very special way the CCMG Secretariat staff who worked tirelessly throughout the observation period. I extend my gratitude to members of the CCMG Steering Committee for providing policy direction to CCMG. I recognize the role of the heads of the Three Church Mother Bodies for their leadership and commitment to maintaining peace in the Country before, during and after elections.