



**COUNTRY REPORT ON PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISIONS BY THE 53<sup>RD</sup> PLENARY ASSEMBLY FOR PRESENTATION AT THE 54<sup>TH</sup> PLENARY ASSEMBLY SESSION IN MAURITIUS, FROM 22<sup>ND</sup> TO 26<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2023**

**November 2023**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report outlines the various initiatives that Zambia has implemented in line with the decisions of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Plenary Assembly Session of the SADC Parliamentary Forum, which was held in Arusha, the United Republic of Tanzania, from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> July, 2023.

## **RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC RESOLUTIONS OF THE 53<sup>RD</sup> PLENARY ASSEMBLY**

### **1.0 Member States to Enhance Gender-Sensitive Investments in Adaptation, Mitigation, Technology Transfer and Capacity Building Initiatives.**

Mr President

The Government of the Republic of Zambia has been providing gender-sensitive social protection to reduce vulnerabilities and poverty in communities, including capacity building in communities with regard to adaptation, mitigation and use of modern technology to improve lives. Various social protection programmes have been designed and implemented to address the needs of vulnerable girls and boys, women and men thus, contributing to the eradication of child marriage and gender-based violence. The National Gender Policy, 2014, further provides measures for gender-sensitive investments and capacity building.

### **2.0 SADC Member States to Review their Domestic Legislation so as to align it with the SADC Model Law on Child Marriage. SADC Member States should set Minimum Age of Marriage at 18 Years without Exception**

Mr President

As at October 2023, the Zambian Parliament amended the Marriage Act to provide a clear definition of a “child” in the law by aligning it with the provisions of the Constitution and the Children’s Code Act to ensure effective harmonisation and

enforcement of laws on child marriage. The Constitution of Zambia and the Children's Code Act both define a child as someone below the age of 18.

### **3.0 SADC Member States to Develop and Implement Strategies for Awareness and Disseminate Messages in the Prevention of Gender-Based Violence and Child Marriage bearing in mind the need to Develop Advocacy Materials which are adapted to Local Languages for better Assimilations**

Mr President

The Government of the Republic of Zambia, with support from United Nations (UN) Agencies and other co-operating partners, has been implementing the Global Programme to End Child Marriage (GPECM), using Community Level Case Management Approach, to ensure that children are protected from such harmful practices.

The GPECM offers a framework promoting the rights of children, especially girls to delay marriage, addressing the conditions that keep the practice in place, and caring for girls already in union. The Community Case Management Approach is used to identify vulnerable children and adolescents in communities and link them to appropriate support and services such as health care services.

The reintroduction of the free education and re-entry policy frameworks from primary to secondary level has ensured that more children access education and stay in school for them to have a better future as opposed to being married off. The Keeping Girls in School (KGS) Programme also ensures that poor and vulnerable girls are educated as opposed to being married off at a tender age. The Programme is important in creating future opportunities for the girls in order for them to have independent and decent livelihoods in future.

Further, Zambia is also implementing a programme to coach and groom '*Boys into Men*' in selected rural parts of the country where levels of harmful practices such as

gender-based violence and child marriage are high. It is a model where boys are engaged through sports to develop healthy relationships with others, including women and girls. This is considered important in ensuring that the boys know the value of girls and women in society.

Also being implemented is the Social Behavioral Change (SBC), which is being implemented in promoting positive gender norms which reduce problems of child marriage, discrimination, violence and harmful practices towards girls and women.

Furthermore, sensitisation campaigns have been conducted in communities on the dangers of gender-based violence and community dialogue have been promoted targeting key community gatekeepers such as traditional and religious leaders, men, women, girls, and boys focusing on rights children, alternatives to child marriage and positive gender norms; and

Lastly, Mr President, Zambia is in the process of producing a simplified version of the Gender Equity and Equality Act to facilitate translation into local languages.

#### **4.0 Member States to Adopt a Holistic and Multisectoral Approach to Child Marriage, Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and Gender-Based Violence in view of the Crucial and Complementary Role of the Stakeholders to Constitute both State and Non-State Actors**

Mr President

I wish to inform this august House that the Government of the Republic of Zambia has been using a multisectoral approach in implementing programmes aimed at curbing child marriage and gender-based violence; as well as supporting sexual reproductive health. The multisectoral approach involves collaboration among state and non-state actors including line ministries, cooperating partners, civil society organisations, non-

governmental organisations, faith-based organisations, community-based organisations, traditional leaders, civic leaders, communities, among others.

**6.0 Member States to Ensure that SADC Citizens, especially those in rural areas, have Access to Clean Energy such as Gas and Solar to Eliminate the use of Unsustainable Sources of Energy such as Charcoal and Firewood, which indiscriminately Destroy Forests and Associated with Gender Discrimination through their Collection and Distribution Streams.**

Mr President

The Energy Sector in Zambia is not only an enabler to the development and actualisation of the economic diversification agenda, but also drives the nation's economic growth.

The Government, through the Ministry of Energy, has prioritised sustainable and clean energy to constitute the majority share of the energy mix. This is attributed to the fact that Zambia is well-suited to harness various clean renewable energy resources, ranging from hydropower, solar, wind and biomass to geothermal.

Despite the availability of these diverse clean resources, the energy supply in Zambia traditionally remains dominated by biomass and waste, constituting an estimated 60% of the total energy consumption. Access to modern clean energy services is therefore still a challenge for the majority of Zambians. Only about 32.5% of Zambian households are connected to electricity services, with 70.6% and 8.1% of households electrified in urban and rural areas, respectively.

To improve the use and availability of clean renewable energy technologies, the Government of Zambia has been reviewing and developing various supportive policies, legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks. These include the Renewable Energy Feed in Tariff, the Global Energy Transfer Feed in Tariff Strategy, the Grid Code, the

Distribution Grid Code, development of mini-grid regulations and the bio-fuels blending mandates.

Other interventions include the following;

- a) **ElectriFi (2019–2025)** - The EU-supported financing mechanism is aimed at supporting market development and private sector initiatives for affordable, sustainable and reliable energy solutions.
- b) **Alternatives to Charcoal (2021–2026)** - The USAID-supported programme aims to reduce deforestation related to the production of charcoal. This intervention uses a market-driven approach to catalyse a shift in household cooking away from charcoal towards private sector-led low emissions technologies and fuels.
- c) **Electricity Services Access Project (2018–2023)** - The World Bank-supported initiative addresses existing regulatory impediments for private sector participation in off-grid electrification, capacity building for key institutions and the design and potential piloting of financial mechanisms to support private sector-led electrification through renewable energy mini-grids and standalone solar systems.
- d) **The Southern Africa Energy Programme (2018 - 2023)** project is designed to increase the supply of and access to electricity in Southern Africa. The programme is funded by USAID in support of the Power Africa initiative.
- e) **Worldwide Fund for Nature-Zambia Country Office and the Ministry of Energy** signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding in 2020 to collaborate on promoting renewable energy development in the country. This created a platform for collaborative activities and support to promote renewable energy development and achieve the National Energy Policy of 2019 Implementation Plan provisions. A joint work plan was developed and includes support for hosting renewable energy investment forums, capacity building support and community sensitisation programmes.

Finally, the Ministry of Energy developed the **Renewable Energy Strategy and Action Plan** in 2022 to provide a roadmap under which the country is expected to implement and monitor progress on various identified market interventions that will transform the market and catalyse the accelerated diffusion of clean renewable energy technologies, especially in rural areas. The strategy is also expected to provide gradual increase in renewable energy investments that will attain a projected 51% electricity access for rural communities by 2030.

#### **7.0 Member States to Advance the Concept of Business and Human Rights in the Extractive Sector in Southern Africa to ensure that Transnational Corporations (TNCs) Comply with the Human Rights and Environmental Laws and that Remedies are Available and Accessible to Citizens and Communities in Case of Violations.**

Mr President,

As this august House is well aware, the extractives sector faces a horde of complex human rights issues due to its vast operational footprint, which can lead to long-term risks. Although the local operating context is key to determining risks arising from operations, mining companies in the sector face different risks and issues among others, the extractive sector rely on unskilled labour which usually constitutes the majority of the workforce. This may pose various human rights risks such as bonded labour, hazardous working conditions, lack of collective bargaining and freedom of association, and health and safety accidents.

Harmonising economic growth with the protection of human rights is one of the great challenges the extractive sector faces today. The extractives industries projects and activities also result in resettlement of communities without adequate consultation and compensation, environmental degradation, deprivation of livelihood and access to clean water. Although not so prevalent in Zambia, illegal mining syndicates, employ children for mining activities, especially at artisanal and small-scale mining level.

The **National Mineral Resources Development Policy of 2022** is being implemented with a focus of “**A Smart, sustainable, diversified and growth centred mining sector.**” To achieve this vision, various interventions are being implemented by the Government and key stakeholders, in advancing the concept of business and human rights in the extractive sector.

The **Mines and Minerals Development Act** governs the sector and provides for licensing, regulation, safety, health and environmental issues.

In the administration of the Act, the following principles among others apply to the development and management of mineral resources;

- (a) Mineral resources are a non-renewable resource and shall be conserved, developed and used prudently, taking into account the needs of the present and future generations;
- (b) The exploitation of minerals shall ensure safety, health and environmental protection; and
- (c) Wasteful mining practices shall be avoided so as to promote sustainable development and prevent adverse environmental effects.

The Government has established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations in the extractive sector. However, gaps exist within the operations of enforcement agencies that may hinder adequate enforcement.

In advancing the concept of business and human rights in the extractive sector, the Government through the Ministry, working with various stakeholders, has developed programmes aimed at providing technical services to various industry players particularly the Artisanal and small-scale Miners to assist in various aspects of their operations including but not limited to sensitisation on the provisions of the law, benefits of sustainable mining practices such as basic mining methods as well as safe



and environmentally sustainable mining, formalisation of informal mining activities and provision of basic mining equipment.

## **8.0 Member States should ensure provision of reliable electrical energy and internet connectivity infrastructure**

Mr President

The Information and Communications Technologies Act, 2009 establishes a Universal Access and Service Fund for purposes of financing universal access and service to Information and Communications Technologies. Using the fund, the Government, through the Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority (ZICTA) implements various projects that are aimed at providing internet connectivity infrastructure in un-served and under-served areas, most of which are rural areas. These range from the construction of communication towers, laying of optic fibre and setting up of computer laboratories.

Specifically, ZICTA has taken measures to improve the internet connectivity infrastructure by embarking on a project to construct mobile communication towers in un-served and under-served parts of the country. A gap analysis for communication infrastructure undertaken by the Authority established that 900 telecommunication towers are needed countrywide to attain 100% universal population coverage.

To this effect, a master plan has been devised to gradually roll-out the towers in phases. Using the Universal Access and Service Fund, 122 Towers are planned to be constructed between 2023 and 2024 with an additional 49 towers upgraded.

9.0 Member States should endeavour to contribute towards closing the Digital Gender Divide Existing in Southern Africa by Facilitating Programmes at Regional Level which aim to sensitise MPs, especially women MPs, to be ICT literate and to promote participatory democracy by engaging citizens through online means.

Mr President

In acknowledging the significant role of ICTs in promoting development, ZICTA has put in place specific measures to empower women and address the challenges hindering their full participation in the digital realm.

A recent national demand side survey undertaken by the Authority, in collaboration with the Zambia Statistics Agency, revealed that a gender divide exists in access and usage of ICTs in the country. Notably, there were more males that had used a mobile phone estimated at 66.7 percent compared to females at 60.6 percent. Similarly, the proportion of males that had used the internet before was higher at 29.0 percent compared to females at 22.2 percent. Efforts to close the gender divide in access and usage of ICT services will need to be enhanced with a view of providing equal opportunities for both males and females.

Some of the initiatives that the Authority has implemented to close the digital gender divide include the '**Girls in ICT Programme**' which is aimed at encouraging young women and girls to take up careers in ICT. Further, the Authority, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established computer laboratories in three rural communities aimed at encouraging women in the localities to access digital services. The Authority has also implemented several targeted programmes aimed at sensitising women and girls on the usage of ICTs as well as the responsible usage of the services. These programmes have been implemented in

schools, local communities and using online platforms such as social media as well as community radio stations.

10.0 Member States to pass the necessary cyber security legislation to protect users, especially women and girls who may be less technologically savvy due to the digital gender divide from falling victim of online fraud and online gender-based violence.

The Cyber Security and Cyber Crimes Act provides for the protection of all persons including women and girls who may be less technologically savvy due to the digital gender divide from falling victim of online fraud and online gender-based violence. In that regard, Part IX of the Act contains the various online activities that are prohibited so as to protect users of online or digital platforms.

Further, with respect to gender-based violence, Section 63 of the Cyber Act criminalises the use of a computer system for any activity that constitutes an offence under any written law. The effect of this provision is that any offence committed under the Anti-Gender-Based Violence Act, using digital or online means is also an offence under Section 63 of the Cyber Security and Cyber Crimes Act.

**MR PRESIDENT, I thank you.**