



JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

**WELCOME REMARKS BY THE
ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

MR. NORMAN CHAVULA

JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

DELIVERED AT THE

LAUNCH OF THE JCTR NATIONAL LEVEL DEBT AUDIT STUDY

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HILTON HOTEL, LUSAKA



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HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT;

PERMANENT SECRETARIES;

MR. TOM THEWO, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE JCTR BOARD OF TRUSTEES;

REPRESENTATIVES FROM COOPERATING PARTNERS;

HEADS OF INSTITUTIONS;

MEMBERS OF THE PRESS;

DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS BOTH IN PERSON AND ONLINE;

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

To start with, please allow me to introduce the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection.

We are a faith-based organisation and a ministry of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). The centre was formed over 30 years ago in 1988. Our existence anchors on translating into action Christian principles and values in our quest to promote social justice in Zambia. We provide from a faith inspired perspective, a critical understanding of current social, political and economic issues and generate action to address them. Our vision is simple. We envision a just Zambian society guided by faith where everyone enjoys the fullness of life.



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Key to JCTR's mission is the gathering and analysis of pertinent and topical data on issues, who's results, JCTR employs in popular education and engagement with policy makers, service providers and other duty bearers on various identified issues.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For many of you, the name JCTR is synonymous with two things; the jubilee 2000 debt campaign and the cost of living. And rightly so. For one, jctr has for over 30 years conducted monthly cost of living surveys that continue to serve as a key source of information for evidence-based policy decisions.

Secondly, the jubilee 2000 debt campaign was momentous to the nation of Zambia. The campaign was part of the global jubilee movement that began in the mid 1990s. The three church mother bodies; the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia (EFZ), the Zambia Episcopal Conference (ZEC) and the council of churches in Zambia (CCZ) who issued a letter on poverty and debt started the campaign. The major issue in the letter was a call to cancel debts so that Zambia can develop. Jctr hosted this campaign.

The motivation of jctr and other faith inspired organisations was that too much of the people's tax money was leaving the country through interest payments on debt. For instance, in a year, the government was at the time paying close to us\$ 200 million at the expense of budget allocation to social sectors such as health and education. Using its moral voice, jctr, other church groups and various non-state actors argued that cancelling debt was about saving human lives, ensuring that even the children of the poor have a right to go to school and Zambian people have economic opportunities through jobs to provide for their families.

The campaign involved a wide range of activities ranging from mass education and mobilisation, incorporation of local leadership such as mayors and members of parliament, popularisation of the campaign using the media and networking with international groups campaigning for the same cause. A number of protests against conditionalities imposed by multi-lateral institutions were also held with support from debt cancellation activists from various African countries including Swaziland,



Lesotho, Angola, Namibia, and South Africa to protest against the macroeconomic policies of the IMF and World Bank and to call for a total debt cancellation.

The campaign culminated into the cancellation of Zambia's debt from us\$7.1 billion in 2004 to us\$502 million in 2006. In October 2007, jctr was awarded a jubilee global leadership award for "excellence in upholding the jubilee values of eliminating poverty, cancelling debt and demanding justice of everyone, everywhere".

Distinguished guests,

Today, close to 16 years after Zambia's debt was cancelled, the nation is struggling with a huge debt burden standing at over us\$14billion. This is double what it had accumulated back in 2006. Zambia's debt has undeniably reached unsustainable levels.

This challenge is what underlines JCTR's current campaign for better public debt management (including the involvement of parliament) and budget monitoring.

The report dubbed "audit on debt strategies/key legal reforms that support the financing for development agenda in Zambia" being launched today thus comes at a very critical time in the nation's history.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Zambia is facing considerable challenges with regards debt management especially in view of the fiscal constraints that this has presented. Of concern to the centre is the implications that this presents for the poor and vulnerable among us.

The report jctr is launching today is therefore envisaged to contribute to enhancing debt transparency and accountability and consequently the nation's debt management. This is then expected to translate to delivering development for all without leaving anyone behind.

Distinguished guests,

Given the foregoing, i would like to express my gratitude to you all for creating time to attend this launch. We are confident that with your participation, this report will



not simply add to the numbers of research works on debt but will pave way for corresponding action as the nation strives to retain to a sustainable debt path.

We also look forward to government's prompt uptake and full implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report. Promptly because the nation runs the risk of losing all the important social sector gains made over many years and undermines the country's efforts to attain the SDGs as well as the country's vision 2030 of becoming a prosperous middle-income country.

It is our sincere hope that this meeting will aid us to discuss and establish alternative policy, legislative and institutional frameworks that will enhance transparency and accountability for prudent debt management.

Let me once again take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to you all for attending this momentous event. It is my expectation that this launch will be a success.

Thank you for your attention.

