



JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

WELCOME REMARKS BY THE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FR. ALEX MUYEBE

JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

DELIVERED AT THE

**2022 NATIONAL SUMMIT ON THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF
ZAMBIA**

THURSDAY, 19TH MAY, 2022

MULUNGUSHI CONFERENCE CENTRE, LUSAKA

HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT PRESENT;

REPRESENTATIVES FROM VARIOUS GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES;

REPRESENTATIVES FROM COOPERATING PARTNERS;

HEADS OF INSTITUTIONS;

MEMBERS OF THE PRESS;

DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS;

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

TO START WITH, PLEASE ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE THE JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION (JCTR).

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.

OUR WORK INVOLVES EVIDENCE GENERATION, ANALYSIS, ADVOCACY, NETWORKING, POPULAR EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH POLICY MAKERS, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND OTHER DUTY BEARERS ON VARIOUS TOPICAL ISSUES.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

FOR MANY OF YOU, THE NAME JCTR IS SYNONYMOUS WITH THE BASIC NEEDS AND NUTRITION BASKET THAT INFORMS US ON THE COST OF LIVING FOR A

FAMILY OF FIVE. INDEED 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.

LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EMPHASISE THAT THE COST OF LIVING AS MEASURED BY JCTR IS NOT WHAT FAMILIES ARE SPENDING ON A MONTHLY BASIS. IT IS HOWEVER, AN ESTIMATION OF WHAT A FAMILY NEEDS TO SPEND TO MEET THEIR MOST BASIC NEEDS ON A MONTHLY BASIS. THE COST OF LIVING AS MEASURED BY JCTR INFORMS VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS ON WHAT THE AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD IN ZAMBIA REQUIRES MONTH ON MONTH TO LIVE A DIGNIFIED LIFE.

IT IS THE COST OF LIVING THAT INDICATES THE GAP THAT EXISTS BETWEEN WHAT PEOPLE NEED VERSUS WHAT THEY HAVE. THE IDENTIFIED GAP IS WHAT SHOULD INFORM OUR POLICY DECISIONS IF ZAMBIANS ARE TO FEEL THE IMPACT OF VARIOUS INTERVENTIONS AIMED AT RAISING THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, DISTIGUISHED GUESTS

THE WORK OF THE BNNB HAS OVER THE YEARS BEEN UNDERTAKEN WITH THE SUPPORT OF VARIOUS PARTNERS.

SPECIFICALLY FOR THIS SUMMIT, IT HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE IRISH EMBASSY. THE IRISH EMBASSY HAS BEEN A FRIEND OF THE CENTRE AND HAS FOR MANY YEARS SIGNIFICANTLY SUPPORTED THE COST OF LIVING WORK. CURRENTLY, JCTR IS WITH SUPPORT OF IRISH AID, IMPLEMENTING THE NUTRITIOUS FOODS AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY PROMOTION PROJECT IMPLEMENTED IN 7 TOWNS AND 2 RURAL AREAS OF ZAMBIA. THE MAIN GOAL OF THIS PROJECT IS IMPROVED WELLBEING OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN THROUGH IMPROVED ACCESS TO DIVERSE AND NUTRITIOUS FOODS.

WHILE MANY ARE MORE FAMILIAR WITH THE URBAN BNNB WORK, THE CENTRE HAS ALSO BEEN CONDUCTING THE RURAL BASIC NEEDS AND NUTRITION BASKET (BNNB). THE TWO ARE DIFFERENT BUT HAVE ONE GOAL; BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS FOR THE ZAMBIAN PEOPLE.

THE URBAN BNNB IS A TOOL USED BY THE CENTER TO MEASURE THE AVERAGE COST OF LIVING FOR A FAMILY OF FIVE¹ IN SIXTEEN TOWNS ACROSS ALL TEN PROVINCES OF ZAMBIA. THE RURAL BASIC NEEDS AND NUTRITION BASKET (RBNNB) ON THE OTHER HAND EXISTS TO ESTABLISH CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

¹ Based on estimates of the Zambia Statistics Agency (ZamStats)

OF BASIC ESSENTIALS (BOTH FOOD AND NON FOOD) AS WELL AS THE STATUS OF SERVICE PROVISION. THIS WORK IS CURRENTLY CONDUCTED IN MAZABUKA AND KABWE DISTRICTS OF ZAMBIA. THE RURAL BNNB IS MOTIVATED BY THE POOR FINANCING TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT THAT HAS RESULTED IN HIGH POVERTY LEVELS, POOR CONNECTIVITY IN TERMS OF ROADS AND BRIDGES, PHONE NETWORKS AND INTERNET, POOR HEALTH SERVICES AND FACILITIES, LONG DISTANCES TO SCHOOLS AND BACKWARDNESS WITH REGARDS OVERALL DEVELOPMENT.

THUS, THE FINDINGS ON THE COST OF LIVING (RURAL AND URBAN) SERVE AS AN ADVOCACY POINT FOR THE CENTRE TOWARDS ACTUALISATION OF THE CENTRE'S VISION, A JUST ZAMBIAN SOCIETY WHERE EVERYONE ENJOYS THE FULLNESS OF LIFE.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, DISTIGUISHED GUESTS,

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OUTLOOK OF THE COUNTRY REMAINS CHALLENGING. SINCE THE LAST JCTR NATIONAL SUMMIT IN MARCH 2022, THE NATION SAW THE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK BECOME WEAK AND KEY MACROECONOMIC FUNDAMENTALS SUCH AS THE EXCHANGE AND INFLATION RATES DETERIORATE. SOME GLIMMER OF HOPE HAS NOW APPEARED AS THESE TWO SIGNIFICANT FUNDAMENTALS ARE STABILISING. THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC AS WELL AS ZAMBIA'S CURRENT DEBT CRISIS ARE THE OTHER SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES.

THE SOCIAL OUTLOOK ALSO APPEARS BLEAK. THE COST OF LIVING IS CURRENTLY STANDING BETWEEN K4,900.00 AND K9,300.00 ACROSS THE COUNTRY WHILE AVERAGE INCOMES STAND AT K4,391.

THE 2021 NATIONAL SUMMIT HAD IDENTIFIED THE FOLLOWING PRIORITY AREAS

1. THE NEED FOR GOVERNMENT TO CONDUCT THE LIVING CONDITIONS MONITORING SURVEY (LCMS).
2. CREATION OF DECENT JOBS.
3. REVISION OF THE MINIMUM WAGE AS THE LAST MINIMUM WAGE REVISION HAS BEEN ERODED IN VIEW OF THE CHANGING SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS.
4. EXPLORATION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF INSTITUTING A LIVING WAGE IN TANDEM WITH THE COST OF LIVING.
5. RESTORATION OF FISCAL AND DEBT SUSTAINABILITY

6. EXPLORATION OF IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF JOBS IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR.
7. UTILISATION OF EMPOWERMENT (OF WOMEN) AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE PATHWAYS TO ENHANCE NUTRITION OUTCOMES.
8. RING FENCING POVERTY REDUCTION FUNDS.

THE 2022 NATIONAL SUMMIT IS THEREFORE BEING HELD UNDER THE THEME; “BUILDING CONDUCIVE CONDITIONS FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT. WE DO HOPE THAT CONCRETE INTERVENTIONS RESPONDING TO THE ABOVE PRIORITY AREAS IDENTIFIED DURING LAST YEARS SUMMIT WILL BE ESTABLISHED IN THIS SUMMIT.

GIVEN THE FOREGOING, I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO YOU ALL FOR CREATING TIME TO ATTEND THIS NATIONAL SUMMIT ON THE SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF ZAMBIA. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT WITH YOUR PARTICIPATION, INTERVENTIONS THAT WILL BE CRITICAL IN BUILDING CONDUCIVE CONDITIONS THAT WILL ENSURE DEVELOPMENT THAT DELIVERS FOR ALL ESPECIALLY THE POOR, THE VULNERABLE AND MARGINALISED WILL BE IDENTIED.

YOU ARE ALL CRITICAL PARTNERS IN OUR WORK. I THEREFORE URGE YOU TO PROVIDE A CRITICAL AND REFLECTIVE EYE ON THIS IMPORTANT WORK.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, COLLEAGUES WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR PARTICIPATION.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.