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**Press Release**

**17<sup>th</sup> May, 2021**

## **DEBT MUST BE AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN AGENDA**

With the onset of campaigns for the 12<sup>th</sup> August General Elections, Zambians are going to be subjected to numerous campaign promises by the various aspiring political candidates. However, it has to be acknowledged that the 2021 elections are unique in the sense that these elections will be held against a backdrop of a huge public debt, which the country is currently owing. As at December 2020, Zambia's debt was estimated at US\$20.46 billion.

It is therefore imperative that all candidates presenting themselves for election on 12<sup>th</sup> August must clearly demonstrate how they are going to address this debt crisis to ensure improved social service provision throughout the country. During the campaign, aspiring political leaders must articulate economic growth programs that respond to the needs of the poor and the vulnerable and how as leaders they are going to contribute to the common good and the preservation of human dignity of every Zambian.

It is for this reason that JCTR is calling on all the aspiring candidates to seize the opportunity offered by the campaign period to address the Zambian voters on how each political party is going to address the debt crisis and the resultant challenges the country is facing. It is not enough for the aspiring candidates to end at promising paradise to the electorates, which as we know is impossible in the face of the huge debt Zambia has. Instead, the candidates must have the debt issue on their campaign agenda and must provide a convincing road map on the way forward regarding the current debt and explain how they are going to manage future debt contractions to ensure that the nation will never be caught up again in another debt crisis in the future.

Further, JCTR is imploring the electorate not to be hoodwinked, but to analyse and interrogate the campaign messages to determine their practicability and viability. JCTR urges the Zambian voters to critically analyse if what aspiring candidates are promising in terms of development, economic growth and job creation is realistic given the country's current fiscal and debt challenges.

Lastly JCTR is appealing to the media to play a vital role of informing and educating the public on various key issues including Zambia's public debt to enhance the electorate's capacity to challenge aspiring presidential candidates to explain how they will manage the country's debt crisis if elected, or if re-elected on 12<sup>th</sup> August. The media is very critical in building the electorate's capacity to cast their vote based on issues and from an informed perspective. This is key to allowing democracy in our country come of age.

Note: Attribute statement to Fr. Alex Muyebe, S.J., JCTR Executive Director. For further clarifications contact the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) on 0954755319. Email: [media.information@jctr.org.zm](mailto:media.information@jctr.org.zm). Martin Mwamba Road, Plot 3813 Martin Mwamba Road, Olympia Park – Lusaka. P. O. Box 37774 Lusaka