

Press Release

29th August, 2021

TIME FOR REFORMS IS NOW!!!

It is gratifying to learn that President Hakainde Hichilema is getting down to work to deliver on promises and expectations. HH and his team has an arduous task to fix a shrinking economy and put it on a growth trajectory. Expectations from the Zambian people who turned out to vote en masse amid widespread poverty, high youth unemployment, and general economic decline as evidenced from the high cost of living and unsustainable external debt, are too high. HH and his administration are expected to implement economic reforms that will put Zambia on a more sustainable fiscal footing, liquidate foreign debt, and secure a bailout loan package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Citizens, particularly, the jobless youths and women are eager to see the new team come up with deliberate efforts to create jobs and business opportunities for these youths and women who made up the majority of the voters who turned out on 12th August.

Mr. Hichilema has stated that his team has come to work; work and more work. There is evidence that HH is a hard worker. One wonders though if the individuals in HH's team will match up to his work ethos. As for work, there is plenty of it cut out for HH and his administration to bring about the much desired constitutional, governance and economic reforms in a consultative and inclusive manner. There is work of fostering unity under our motto of "One Zambia One Nation". This is predicated on embracing a path of healing of the wounds of any wrongs or harms committed during the just ended elections. People must learn to move on and march together towards a hope-filled future that taps into the all-embracing leadership qualities of women and the very creative and innovative energies of youths. There is work of ridding this nation of political and electoral violence once and for all. This entails completely abolishing cadreism in any shape or form in this country by finding creative and sustainable ways of economically empowering those who are accustomed to making a living from this way of life.

There is work of strengthening democracy anchored on the rule of law, respect of human rights and people's liberties as a catalyst for economic recovery and national development. This must include a people-driven constitutional refinement with a referendum to consider adopting some progressive provisions to enhance the Bill of Rights. This must also include legal reforms to address retrogressive provisions in the Public Order Act, introduction of the access to information law to enhance transparency and accountability, and reforms of other contentious pieces of legislation in our laws. Time for these reforms is now when the new administration is still trying to impress or trying to pretend that they are a different crop of leaders from their predecessors. The wheels of reforms must start turning now within the first 100 days of HH's inauguration and before the new tenant at Plot 1 and his new administration begin to get comfortable and entrenched in destructive political virus of complacency and disdain for good counsel from well-meaning stakeholders.

In endeavoring to steer Zambia in the right direction, HH has professed to have adopted a servant-leadership model to guide his work. Robert K Greenleaf coined the servant leadership concept to guide leaders to approach their role not from the perspective of authority or power but from that of service to the community following the biblical teachings and examples of Jesus Christ. When leaders prioritize being at the service of the people other than being at the service of their own interest or greed, they inevitably empower the community to grow in commitment to the common or shared vision. If

HH shares this same understanding of this concept of servant leadership then the country is on the right trajectory to depart from the old debilitating template of leadership that we have continuously been subjected to. This is a refreshing experience which we are all looking forward to.

However, the question yet to be answered is whether HH's team will buy into this model of leadership. HH needs the support of a game-changing team. Does each member of his team share his vision? The danger is that if there are some individuals within his team who don't share and internalize this model of leadership, and for that matter, other goals he has set for himself and his administration such as zero tolerance to corruption, these individuals are likely to militate against their leader and his vision. HH will need to be incisive in identifying elements of passive aggressiveness within his team where some opportunist individuals will pretend to be with him and pretend to share his vision, when deep down their hearts they are a wolf in a sheep skin. These individuals will slowly and surely begin to work for his downfall. A servant leader must be strong enough to embrace a counter-cultural way of doing business even at the expense of rocking a boat or losing close allies or friends. The Bible has Jesus as an example for it. Zambians must pray hard that HH will be a transformative leader and that he will have genuine transformative individuals in his team to drive this country in the right direction of strong and functioning governance and economic systems. This transformative journey must begin now.

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