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United Nations: Human Rights Council Twenty-second Session

Agenda item 6 Universal Periodic Review: Item 6 of the Agenda: Consideration of the UPR Report for Zambia

Oral Statement for 22nd Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Thank you Mr President:

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection, JCTR, together with its partner Misereor, welcomes the commitment of the government of Zambia to enact the Access to Information Bill.

We applaud the efforts so far made to ensure broad based consultation and input into preparing the Bill.

We appreciate the invitation of Civil Society, such as the JCTR to sit on the government task force to move forward the enactment of the Bill. We also appreciate efforts by the government through the task force to conduct education and sensitization efforts to enable as many stakeholders as possible to understand the importance of such a law to the citizens of Zambia.

However, we note with concern repeated postponements of the presentation of the Bill to parliament. We were hoping that the Bill will be presented to the current session of parliament. However, the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia stated on the floor of parliament that the Bill will be presented to parliament later this year.

Therefore, we call on the government not to postpone the presentation of the Bill to parliament any further. We believe that failure to enact the Bill into law is failure to promote a transparent government.

We strongly support the Government's affirmation that "Zambians are entitled to a better life, a democratic and transparent government".

Such principles need to be translated into concrete actions backed up with necessary enabling legislation. We hope that the passing of the access to information will be such an enabling legislation to facilitate access to information by all the citizens of the country without undue impediments.

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