

Sunday, Lusaka (February 27, 2022)



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **NO PROTECTED AREAS IN ZAMBIA REMARKS SHOCKS CEJ**

The Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) is deeply shocked by what seemed to be a political rhetorical response to a sensitive environmental issue through a radio interview by the Member of Parliament Hon. Emmanuel Tembo of Feira Constituency, Luangwa District.

At the outset, while we take strong exception to the innuendoes in Hon. Tembo's remarks about our organisation, we choose to refrain from making a direct reaction to these unsubstantiated innuendoes fuelled by political expediency. Rather, we shall focus on the substantive matters: bringing the legal profession and Zambian Parliament into disrepute, as well as failure to recognise the sanctity of our constitution.

It is unfortunate that a policy maker, a qualified lawyer for that matter, would adamantly state without reservations that there is no such a thing as a protected area in Zambia and that "the only protection is the stomach." Uttering such careless words on a public media is an insult to the authority enshrined in the Zambia's Constitution. Protected areas such as forest reserves, national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and others have been established in line with the provisions of the constitution.

The Constitution, among other things outlines the principles of the land policy, natural resource management and development. It contains dedicated articles that deal with *inter alia* degradation including the polluter-pays-principle, protection of sensitive cultural and ecological sites, a precautionary approach in the event of scientific uncertainty, rehabilitation of degraded areas, measures for a clean, safe, and healthy environment, prevention of harmful use of the environment, waste management, public participation, enforcement of environmental standards and establishment of mechanisms to address climate change.

Hon. Tembo's statement is a direct mockery to internationally recognised Conventions, Treaties and Agreements on environmental sustainability and sustainable development in general to which Zambia is a signatory. The Head of state, His Excellency, Mr. Hakainde Hichilema has shown total commitment towards Environmental Protection both at local and international levels. The president has in the past few months after being ushered into office signed the "Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forest and Land use". Furthermore, establishment of a dedicated Ministry of Green Economy and Environment to help the nation realise sustainable development and the green agenda.

We understand that being a politician, Hon. Tembo may be trying to advance his political agenda of ensuring that he takes the necessary

development to his constituency. Without doubt, this is a noble cause but one which must not be pursued with insincerity, factual inaccuracies, and deliberate thrust to mislead stakeholders and the public.

Needless to remind Honourable Tembo about the sanctity of the position of Member of Parliament, he took oath to protect and honour the constitution. As a Member of Parliament, he represents the larger masses in both his constituency and as a law maker at national level. As a lawyer, we expect Hon. Tembo to be aware of the domestic, regional, and international legal and policy frameworks relevant to the matter at hand.

The unfortunate and uninformed comments made by the MP Hon. Emmanuel Tembo have several impacts including the following:

- i. Undermining the current President's commitment to environmental protection and ecosystem restoration.
- ii. Belittles internationally recognized treaties and conventions that support the existence and value of protected areas.
- iii. Distorts the collective image of Zambia's policy makers, seeing that a Member of Parliament who is a law and policy maker disregards the existence of protected areas and their ascribed value.

We therefore call upon:

- **The Honourable MP** not to stifle good environmental governance by *disparaging protected areas and undermining Environmental Civil Society organisations when they give expert opinion on issues of national interest. Rather, we encourage him to engage in constructive dialogue on this and other national matters with the decorum expected of his office as a Member of Parliament.*
- **The Law Association of Zambia** to censure Hon. Tembo. His remarks are totally inconsistent with their aspirations as a professional body and a total affront to the Constitution and its sanctity.
- **The Speaker of the National Assembly** to censure Hon. Tembo for bringing the Parliament into disrepute. His statement is bordering on denying or disregarding the role of Parliament which passed the legislations which provide for the establishment of different categories of protected areas and questioning the sanctity of the constitution.

**Issued By:**

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