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GOVERNMENT ENDORSES CREATION OF CHILDREN'S CLIMATE COUNCIL

Green Economy and Environment Permanent Secretary Douty Chibamba has urged Members of the Zambia Children's Climate Council to be committed to the implementation of its actions.

Dr Chibamba said the creation of the Zambia Children's Climate Council is a milestone in the collective journey towards sustainable development.

The Permanent Secretary said this in Lusaka during a Children's Climate Summit celebrating 100 years of Legislature, in a speech delivered on his behalf by the Ministry's Principal Climate Change Officer Adaptation, Kasanda Bunda.

Dr Chibamba said building resilience against climate change risks and protecting the health well-being and safety, especially of the most vulnerable children, is critical in the country.

The Senior Government Official said children are inarguably the most disproportionately impacted by climate change and the most underrepresented within the climate change discourse.

"The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) finds that children aged ten or younger in the year 2020 are projected to experience a nearly fourfold increase in extreme events under 1.5°C of global warming by 2100, and a five-fold increase under 3°C warming. It also finds that such increases in exposure would not be experienced by a person aged 55 in the year 2020 in their remaining lifetime under any warming scenario. Today's young people and future generations will also witness stronger negative effects of climate change on food production and availability. The warmer it gets, the more difficult it will become to grow or produce, transport, distribute, buy, and store food – a trend that is projected to hit poor populations the hardest," he said.

He said the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's (IDMC) 2022 Global Report on Internal Displacement found that 42% of those displaced in 2022 were children.

Dr Chibamba said climate trends in Zambia have shown that, climate-induced hazards such as droughts, floods and extreme temperatures have increased in frequency and intensity over the past few decades.

He said the country is just recovering from the cholera outbreak that escalated into a critical public health emergency which affected all ten provinces of our country with fatalities reaching 700.

"Again we are now experiencing devastating dry spells across many parts of the country and His Excellency Mr. Hakainde Hichilema, President of the Republic of Zambia on 29th February, 2024 declared the drought situation experienced as a National Disaster because of the inadequate rain that has devastated the agricultural sector, affecting more than one million families. The drought situation as you have been informed, has been exacerbated by climate change and the El Niño weather phenomenon, the crisis which has threatened national food security, as well as water and energy supply. This has serious implications on the wellbeing of the children due to the most likely indirect aggravation of nutrition and malnutrition as well as public health and sanitation challenges if not addressed," he said.

The Permanent Secretary said Zambia has put up Country Frameworks that address the challenges of Climate Change and transition to green growth which includes the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) country climate priority to the Paris Agreement.

Dr Chibamba said Zambia has also put in place the National Adaptation Plan that provides for medium to long-term climate adaptation prioritized adaptation options for the climate-sensitive sectors.

"We also have the Green Growth Strategy providing Country opportunities of transitioning the Country to climate resilient and green growth pathways. I, therefore, would request you all to please going forward see how we could strengthen and enhance the implementation of children's climate priorities in our country's Climate Change and Green Growth Framework. The Ministry's focus is also on strengthening collaboration and partnership to foster children climate change implementation among which includes; partnership with Save the Children on the implementation of the Children and Youth Climate Resilience Project. The project which seeks to enhance youth and children sensitive climate change coordination and upgrading the Ministry website to be youth and child friendly. We are also a partner in executing the Facility for Action for Climate Empowerment to achieve the Nationally Determined Contribution (FACE-NDC) project with Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. The project aims to improve capacity of youths, pupils, teachers, professionals, private and public and community at large to adopt climate friendly-behaviours to support green transition of the economy," he said.

The Permanent Secretary said he was optimistic about the establishment of the Zambia Children's Climate Council as it will seek to set conversion in addressing children's needs concerning climate change.

"It will provide a platform for young minds to converge, share ideas and ignite action. Zambia Children's Climate Council actions are critical in complementing government efforts in addressing the needs of the children and a clear demonstration of the much-needed strong partnerships and collaboration," he said.

Meanwhile, Care for Nature Executive Director Nsama Kearns emphasized that children are capable of speaking for themselves on critical issues including Climate Change.

And Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ) Executive Director Maggie Mwape said her organization will fully support the newly established Zambia Children's Climate Council.

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Centre for Environment Justice (CEJ)

Plot 269, Off Twin Palm Road, Ibex Hill, Lusaka -Zambia
Visit CEJ website: <https://cejzambia.org/> and Facebook: <https://facebook.com/cejzambia.org>
Call: +260 954 713003 / +260 964 244255 / +260 973 389859
Email: info@cejzambia.org