



COMMONWEALTH SPECIAL ENVOY TO ZAMBIA
Prof. Ibrahim Gambari

**Press Statement by Prof Ibrahim Gambari, Commonwealth
Special Envoy to Zambia following visit to Zambia from
23-26 November 2017**

26 November 2017

I have been in Zambia since Thursday, 23 November 2017 in my capacity as the Special Envoy of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC's in order to continue discussions and consultations on the political dialogue process in Zambia. As you are aware, the main aim of this process is to promote an inclusive, nationally-owned, forward-looking political dialogue process that would do the following: address issues of concern to political stakeholders, reduce political tension and violence, create an environment that would promote and uphold tolerance and civility, facilitate a roadmap on governance reforms and enhance political and social cohesion in the country ahead of future elections.

This visit is my second visit and the objective has been to continue discussions on the establishment of mechanisms and structures for the political dialogue process.

Since my arrival on Thursday, I have held extensive consultations with a broad range of stakeholders, including HE President Edgar Lungu, leader of the UPND Mr Hakainde Hichilema, the Minister of Justice, the Chief Justice, the House of Chiefs, representatives of political parties, the church mother bodies, the Zambia Centre for Interparty Dialogue and several other civil society organisations comprising of women's, governance, youth, media groups, the Law Association, Commonwealth High Commissioners and development partners.

I would like to stress that these consultations are not exhaustive - we will continue to broaden the circles of consultation as we go along in an endeavour to be as inclusive as possible.

During this visit, I shared elements of a broad strategy, based upon by the feedback from the extensive consultations I had previously. I have invited stakeholders to consider this strategy and provide me with their comments in order that we are best able to address the key issues that were conveyed to me during my last visit. We have been able to broadly categorise the key issues as constitutional and institutional reform, electoral reform and the need to institutionalise a culture of tolerance and civility in politics.

In setting the broad outlines of this proposed strategy, I am mindful of the need to ensure national ownership, sustainability and inclusivity. Therefore, the strategy must be further discussed and fine-tuned by national stakeholders. The final construct will be determined by consultations I will continue to have with all relevant parties.

I have proposed to stakeholders a dialogue strategy with several layers for consideration. These layers include:

- Dialogue between the **President and the leader of the main opposition political party**;
- Dialogue between the ruling party, the Patriotic Front and the main opposition political party, the United Party for National Development (UPND);
- Dialogue within a broader **working Group** comprising representatives of registered political parties (under the aegis of the Zambia Centre for Interparty Dialogue), the Electoral Commission of Zambia, civil society organisations, religious institutions, traditional leaders, the intelligentsia, the police and Parliament, and the Ministry of Justice; and
- A Steering Committee which could comprise **people of integrity nominated by political parties, traditional leaders, church leaders and persons nominated by civil society**.

Given the importance of national ownership, the role of the Zambia Centre for Interparty Dialogue would be essential in supporting this broader dialogue.

I am also proposing, for consideration, that, alongside the dialogue process, targeted capacity building workshops are proposed for the police and security services, political parties, civil society and the media.

The strategy also proposes that the dialogue culminates in the establishment of a National Peace Architecture for high-level conflict prevention in Zambia in the long-term.

I have also proposed a timeframe and milestones with the proposal that the agreed structures be established in December 2017 and that the dialogue intensifies in January 2018.

As I have stated in the past, the road ahead will be full of challenges but I would like to encourage political leaders and other stakeholders, including the media, to remain focused, committed and supportive of an environment conducive to a constructive, results-driven dialogue process. I am very pleased that President Lungu and Mr Hichilema, as well as a cross section of stakeholders, remain fully committed to this dialogue process.

I would like to emphasise that this process is a Zambian process and its success would be defined by the Zambian people. The process must be led and owned by Zambians. The Commonwealth's role is that of facilitation. It is therefore imperative to continue to maintain an environment of mutual respect to help build confidence and trust.

Stakeholders must also exercise patience. There is no quick fix to dialogue and therefore a solid foundation has to be laid to ensure sustainability and success.

I intend to be back to Lusaka soon again in furtherance of my assignment.

God bless Zambia, God bless Africa!

