

**Statement by Prof Ibrahim Gambari, Commonwealth Special Envoy to Zambia
following visit to Zambia from
12-17 December 2017**

18 December 2017

Since my arrival on 12 December on a five-day visit to Zambia in my capacity as Commonwealth Secretary-General's Special Envoy, I have held extensive consultations with a broad range of stakeholders, including HE President Edgar Lungu, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the leader of the United Party for National Development (UPND) Mr Hakainde Hichilema, the Minister of Justice, the Board of the Zambia Centre for Interparty Dialogue (ZCID), political leaders, the Church Mother Bodies, representatives of civil society organisations, Commonwealth High Commissioners and development partners.

During this visit, I engaged and deepened consultations on the role of national institutions, the church and civil society organisations in driving the dialogue process forward. I held extensive discussions with the ZCID, a platform for political parties with a mandate to support inter-party dialogue. For purposes of sustainability and national ownership, it is important for national institutions to be supported to own, effectively lead and sustain the dialogue process.

I am pleased that all relevant stakeholders, both national and international, are very supportive and committed to this process. In this regard, I wish to use this opportunity to express special thanks to the Republican President HE Mr Edgar Lungu and the leader of the UPND (main opposition political party), Mr Hakainde Hichilema, for their continued support and unwavering commitment to this noble cause of engaging in a forward-looking national conversation that would further deepen the culture of dialogue, democracy and conflict prevention in Zambia.

I look forward to returning to Zambia early in the new year to conclude the process of establishing the relevant mechanisms in order to pave the way for the formal commencement of the dialogue process.

I would like to conclude by wishing the people of Zambia a happy festive season and a prosperous and peaceful new year 2018.

God bless Zambia, God bless Africa!

One Zambia, one Nation!