



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

**HON. DEPUTY CHIEF JUSTICE MICHAEL MUSONDA'S
REMARKS TO MARK THE COMMEMORATION
OF THE CHILD JUSTICE WEEK
9TH TO 13TH OCTOBER, 2023**

**CHILD JUSTICE'S WEEK
HELD ON 11TH OCTOBER, 2023
AT SUPREME COURT GROUNDS
LUSAKA**

It is a great honour and privilege for me to have been asked to be part of this crucial event to mark the commemoration of the Child Justice Week 2023 which commenced on the 9th day of October, 2023 and will end on 13th October, 2023.

Allow me, from the outset, to extend the Chief Justice's and the entire Judiciary's appreciation and gratitude to you, the Guest of Honour, the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia for sparing time to come and officiate at this event. We are truly grateful your Honour.

Following its inaugural and eventful celebration on 14th November, 2022, Child Justice Week is set to be a very significant annual event on our Judiciary's annual calendar.

Let me immediately indicate that although this Child Justice Week fittingly celebrates our country's Child Justice Sector, the week also represents a significant

time to pause, reflect and take stock of the progress, achievements as well as setbacks which may have characterised the Child Justice Sector over the preceding year. It is also a time for all stakeholders to rededicate themselves to the persistently crying call for Child Justice in our land.

Guest of Honour, it is often said that a country and its people are judged by the way they treat their elderly or senior citizens. This, indeed, is as true and accurate as night follows day. However, in as much as it is an unassailable truism that a country and its people are judged by the way in which they treat their senior citizens, so too is or ought to be the case that a country and its people should be judged by the manner in which they care for or treat the Country's children.

Hon. Guest of Honour, I dare say indeed that the fate of any country's future depends so much on how such

a country and its people treat or care for their children.

As an arm of Government charged with the hallowed and venerated constitutional mandate of securing justice for the people of this country, the Judiciary was extremely thrilled when our Country's Parliament enacted the Children's Code Act No. 12 of 2022. We in the Judiciary saw this piece of legislation as a game changer in the child justice jigsaw puzzle. We saw this legislation as having been enacted against the backdrop of a justice system which was highly deficient in terms of addressing the peculiar justice needs of our children.

Let me immediately state here that while the Judiciary celebrated the enactment of the Children's Code Act, our institution has had to endure countless obstacles and frustrations in relation to the practical implementation of this celebrated and truly laudable piece of legislation.

Unfortunately, as Judiciary, we do not enjoy the luxury which might be available to the Executive arm of Government (as the conceivers of this law) or the Legislature (as the enactors of the law in question). I say this because, while the two arms of Government can conceive and bring about legislation such as our Children's Code and leave matters there, our sacred role, as adjudicators, does not permit merely admiring the law as it is printed on paper. Our role requires, nay, demands that we breath life into the law, to see to it that justice is administered in accordance with the dictates of the law.

When the Children's Code Act was enacted in August, 2022, its implementation was predicated on a variety of assumptions. A number of things were required to be put in place in order to secure an efficacious implementation of the Code.

When we celebrated the Child Justice Week 2022 in November of that year, that celebration arose barely a few weeks after the Act was enacted. Indeed, even the theme of the Child Justice Week of last year revolved around the launching of a new and revolutionary Child Justice system anchored on the newly enacted Children's Code. I am glad indeed that the past one year afforded the Judiciary an opportunity to fully appreciate and internalise the new law and all its attendant operational ramifications.

I am also excited to note that this year's Child Justice Week seeks to build on the seminal events of last year by embracing a number of very pertinent objectives, including the key objectives of enhancing stakeholder understanding and internalisation of the Children's Code and the promotion of collaboration among the various actors in the Child Justice Sector.

I urge all the different actors in the Child Justice Sector to continue deepening their understanding of the type of justice that the Children's Code seeks to deliver for our children.

Let us spare neither effort nor initiative to actualise the lofty ideals which underlie our Children's Code. The Government, in particular, has a key role of ensuring that our highly ambitious Children's Code Act does not turn out to be our Parliament's still-born initiative. The Children's Code is our children's call for our Country to be in step with the rest of the civilised and progressive world in championing quality justice for children.

The Government and all stakeholders must help to save the Judiciary from the public scorn, ridicule and contempt which, naturally, have ensued or flowed from the Judiciary's failure to secure total implementation of the Children's Code.

I also urge our Child Justice partners – the Police, Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Correctional Services and all others to up their game and ensure that our children who come into conflict with the law enjoy the benefits which the people of our country, through their Parliament, prescribed in this law called the Children’s Code Act.

Before I stand aside and give way to the Guest of Honour’s key note address, allow me to reiterate the Judiciary’s indelible gratitude to her Honour, the Vice President for having come to grace this occasion. Madam Vice President, your presence at this event clearly demonstrates the importance which the Republican President and his Administration attaches to the matters affecting our Country’s children. May I also record the Judiciary’s continuing gratitude to the National Child Justice Forum for organising this year’s events to mark the Child Justice Week 2023. In the same vein, I wish to record

the Judiciary's appreciation to untiring partners in the Child Justice Crusade such as UNICEF, ...

I also wish to pay tribute to the Judge-in-Charge of the Children and Family Division of the High Court and all her staff for their commitment and dedication towards the full actualisation of Child Justice in our country.

May all the events which have been lined up to mark the 2023 Child Justice Week be successful, rewarding and truly memorable.

It is now my singular honour and privilege to call upon Her Honour Mrs. Mutale Nalumango, the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia to deliver her keynote address.

I thank you.

