

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ELECTIONS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN LAUNCH**

**Lusaka, 25<sup>th</sup> September 2024** – The Judiciary of Zambia has launched its inaugural Strategic Plan for the Advisory Committee on Elections Management, focused on effectively managing electoral disputes.

In his keynote address, during the launch at the Supreme Court grounds in Lusaka, His Lordship the Hon. Acting Chief Justice Michael Musonda, SC, acknowledged that although the Judiciary has long been involved in resolving electoral disputes, the institution lacked a formalized framework to guide this crucial function. He noted that the establishment of the Advisory Committee was a priority for Chief Justice Dr Mumba Malila, SC, following his appointment.

The Hon. Acting Chief Justice, added that, "It is extremely refreshing that Chief Justice Dr Malila prioritised the establishment of an Advisory Committee dedicated to election dispute resolution management. Since its formation, under the leadership of Lady Justice Maria Kawimbe, the Committee has been diligently working towards the creation of this strategic plan, which we proudly launch today."

The strategic plan outlines the Committee's work over the next four years, drawing on the Judiciary's experience from the last two general elections (2016 and 2021). His Lordship emphasised the Judiciary's unwavering commitment to safeguarding the integrity of democratic elections, ensuring that all eligible citizens can exercise their right to vote securely and with confidence that their vote will truly count.

In her opening remarks, Hon. Lady Justice Kawimbe, Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Elections Management, stated that the strategic plan seeks to enhance judicial transparency and accountability in resolving electoral disputes, strengthen the Judiciary's capacity for effective dispute resolution, and promote inclusiveness by ensuring that vulnerable groups in society have equal access to justice. She added that "the Judiciary, as the ultimate guardian of justice, has a critical role in ensuring electoral disputes are resolved efficiently and effectively,"

The Executive Director of the Electoral Law and Governance Institute for Africa (ELGIA), Mr Felix Owuor, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative, Mr James Wakiaga, both congratulated the Judiciary on this momentous occasion. They also commended Chief Justice Dr Mumba Malila for establishing the Advisory Committee on Election Management as a stand-alone entity.

"Zambia is now the second country in Africa, after Kenya, to have a permanent Judiciary committee dedicated to electoral dispute resolution. Only three countries, Kenya, Zambia, and Malawi currently have such committees embedded in their judiciaries," remarked Mr Owuor.

And Acting High Commissioner at the British High Commission, Mr Sam Waldock, added that credible elections are fundamental to democracy, and at the heart of this credibility is a robust dispute resolution mechanism. "The launch of this strategic plan is a significant step forward as Zambia prepares for the 2026 elections," he said.

He further emphasised the critical role of the Advisory Committee in fostering public trust in the electoral process, affirming the Judiciary's place as the ultimate safeguard of Zambia's democracy.

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**Contact:**

**Kalumba Chisambisha-Slavin**

**Deputy Director – Corporate Communication**

**Judiciary of Zambia**

**Email: [kalumba.slavin@judiciaryzambia.com](mailto:kalumba.slavin@judiciaryzambia.com) Website:**

**[www.judiciaryzambia.com](http://www.judiciaryzambia.com)**