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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

**THE JUDICIARY OF ZAMBIA LAUNCHES CAPACITY-BUILDING TRAINING
IN ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

Lusaka, 27th May 2025 – The Judiciary of Zambia, in partnership with Pepperdine University, this morning launched a capacity-building training programme for justice sector stakeholders. The training which focuses on advancing Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in both criminal and civil matters, aims to enhance the skills and understanding of justice sector actors, with a specific focus on Plea Bargaining and Commercial Mediation.

The four-day training is anchored on the Judiciary's 2025 Criminal Justice theme: ***“Exploring and Employing Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms in Criminal Cases as a Tool to Counter Delays in the Delivery of Justice.”*** The exercise reflects the Judiciary's commitment to finding practical solutions to long-standing challenges such as delays in the delivery of justice and case backlogs, issues that continue to weigh down the justice system.

In his keynote address read on his behalf by Hon. Mr. Justice Charles Zulu, Judge-in-Charge of the High Court Generalist Division, the Hon. Chief Justice Dr. Mumba Malila, SC, emphasised that ADR offers a transformative opportunity to humanise the justice system. He noted that the integration of ADR, particularly in criminal matters, allows for the creation of a more restorative, efficient, and equitable justice system that addresses not only legal violations, but also the emotional, social, and psychological needs of those impacted by crime.

“This training marks a critical shift, from concept to implementation,” said the Chief Justice. “Plea bargaining and other ADR frameworks provide mechanisms through which offenders can, in appropriate cases, freely acknowledge responsibility in a manner that is both cost-effective and time-saving, without compromising justice.”

He further stated that for too long, dispute resolution outside the trial process has been confined mostly to civil matters. Now, Zambia stands at the threshold of a judicial transformation that is aligned with modern practices, particularly in the use of ethically sound plea negotiation frameworks. These approaches, he said, enhance proportionality, promote reconciliation, and ultimately lead to more meaningful outcomes for both victims and offenders.

Chief Justice Malila also highlighted the many benefits that ADR is expected to bring, including reduced court congestion, expedited case resolution, and increased public confidence in the justice system. In civil and commercial matters, mediation serves as a strategic tool to resolve disputes while preserving business relationships and fostering economic stability. "This is not just an academic discussion, it is a call to action," His Lordship urged. "We must embrace ADR not as a secondary mechanism, but as an essential partner in the delivery of justice. This requires rethinking our legal culture, our procedures, and our approach to training."

The Judiciary of Zambia is grateful to Pepperdine University for its unwavering support and longstanding commitment to strengthening ADR in Zambia. The institution has been instrumental in facilitating this training and continues to serve as a reliable partner in the Judiciary's broader justice reform agenda.

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