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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

JUDICIARY OF ZAMBIA CONVENES REGIONAL SUMMIT ON ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRIMES IN SOUTHERN AND EAST AFRICA

Livingstone, 16th March – In a decisive move to protect the integrity of financial systems in Zambia and across Africa, the Judiciary of Zambia is hosting a high-level regional workshop on Adjudicating Money Laundering and Corruption in Southern and East Africa.

Opening the workshop this morning in Zambia's tourism capital, Hon. Chief Justice Dr. Mumba Malila, SC, delivered a powerful call to action against what he described as a "stealthy plague" of financial misconduct. Addressing judges and magistrates from the Kingdom of Eswatini, the Republic of Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zanzibar and Zimbabwe, the Chief Justice characterized economic and financial crimes, such as corruption, illicit financial flows, and tax evasion, as the bane of many countries' efforts to develop economically.

The Chief Justice addressed the historical weaknesses in the justice system, citing the *Zambian case of Stella Chibanda & 3 Others v The People* as a sobering example of systemic failure. In that instance, a corruption case initiated in 2004 only reached finality in 2022, meaning the accused only began serving their sentences nearly twenty years after the crimes were committed. He noted that nearly twenty years of interaction with the legal system represents a great deal of needless expense and human anguish, as court delays make prisoners of both the victim and the suspect. To end this era of "tardy prosecution," the Chief

Justice has spearheaded an aggressive reform agenda, including the January 2022 creation of the Economic and Financial Crimes Court (EFCC).

Since its inception, the specialized EFCC model has already begun to vindicate the decision to move toward judicial specialization. Despite the teething troubles and logistical hurdles, the courts have successfully forfeited vast sums to the state, including, among other sums, K321,512,212.77, US\$28,457,594.97, and GBP 557,630.99. These developments demonstrate the vital role specialized courts play in recovering millions from individuals unable to explain their acquisitions and returning those resources to the public. To ensure this efficiency continues, the 2024 Criminal Procedure Code (EFCC) Rules now aim to resolve cases within a five-month window, protecting the presumption of innocence while neutralizing the guerilla-type tactics and Fabian delays often used by suspects to frustrate the law.

Addressing critics who labeled these judicial reforms as "selective" or "political," Dr. Malila remained firm in his conviction, stating that leadership was never designed to be a popularity contest, but a stewardship. He remarked that when a leader begins to fear being misunderstood, they slowly trade conviction for comfort, and that criticism is often proof of advancement rather than error. Supported by the Democratic Governance and Rights Unit (DGRU) and the Southern and Eastern Africa Chief Justices' Forum, this summit serves as a platform for cross-border learning. As deliberations continue in the shadow of the Victoria Falls, participants are tasked with developing regional guidelines to ensure that as crimes transcend borders, the judicial response does the same.

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