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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

CHIEF JUSTICE DR. MUMBA MALILA, AND UNICEF DISCUSS CHILD JUSTICE IN ZAMBIA

LUSAKA, 11th March 2026 – The Chief Justice of Zambia, Hon. Dr. Mumba Malila, SC, today received a delegation from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), led by Country Representative Dr. Saja Abdoullah. The courtesy call served as a platform to discuss the advancement of restorative justice and the strengthening of child protection mechanisms in Zambia.

Central to the dialogue was the evolution of restorative justice, a mission active in Zambia since 2000, and the urgent necessity for the Ministry of Justice to approve the Rules required to fully operationalize the Children’s Code Act. Both parties observed that current delays in these approvals inadvertently perpetuate a climate of impunity by preventing vulnerable children from accessing essential legal protections and services.

During the exchange, Chief Justice Malila expressed gratitude to cooperating partners for the successful implementation of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) fast-track courts at all provincial centres in Zambia. He specifically advocated for the expansion of these GBV courts to include dedicated courts for children with cognitive impairments. The Chief Justice noted that these children remain particularly vulnerable to defilement and abuse due to communication barriers that often prevent them from reporting crimes, necessitating targeted judicial safeguards and protective measures to ensure that their voices are heard.

The meeting further underscored the need for a multi-faceted approach to reform, prioritizing specialized training for frontline stakeholders, such as the police and social welfare officers, on diversion and child-sensitive procedures. To bolster the integrity of the system, the meeting called for the tightening of adoption laws and oversight to ensure that legal processes are not exploited as

conduits for child trafficking. Furthermore, the Chief Justice highlighted the critical need for halfway houses to provide safe, rehabilitative alternatives to detention for children in conflict with the law and those intercepted during trafficking, ensuring that their well-being is maintained throughout the judicial process.

The Chief Justice was accompanied by Hon. Justice Anessie Banda-Bobo, Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Gender in Development, and Hon. Justice Mwamba Chanda-Mate, Judge-in-Charge of the Family and Children's Division. The UNICEF delegation included Dr. Saja Abdoullah, Ms. Emelia Allan, Chief of Child Protection, and Mr. Barnabas Mwansa, Child Protection Specialist.

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