

THURSDAY, 29 MARCH, 2018

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW AND ZAMBIA'S STRIDES TO IMPROVE AND UPHOLD HUMAN RIGHTS

The Minister of Justice (Mr Lubinda)

Madam Speaker, I am grateful to you for giving me this opportunity to address this august House on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and Zambia's strides to improve and uphold human rights.

The Universal Periodic Review is a process adopted by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations to provide an opportunity for all member states to declare the actions they have taken to improve the human rights situation in their respective countries and to overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights.

Madam, Zambia submitted her First Cycle Universal Periodic Review Report in 2008. The report provided the benchmark on which subsequent reports would be anchored. In 2012, the Second Cycle Universal Periodic Review Report was submitted. The second report focused on the recommendations that were made to the 2008 report.

I wish to inform you, this House and the nation at large that in November, 2017, I led a delegation to the 28th Session of the Universal Period Review Working Group which was held in Geneva, Switzerland from 6th to 17th November, 2017, where I presented the Third Cycle UPR report which centred on recommendations made in the 2012 report.

Madam Speaker, after the presentation and adoption of the National Report of Zambia, member states made 203 recommendations to Zambia.

Accordingly, examined the recommendations and supported a total of ninety, it deferred two and referred a total of 111 for further consultation with stakeholders at national level.

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Madam, being a Government that upholds democratic principles, on the 7th of March, 2018, the Ministry of Justice organised a consultative workshop with national stakeholders to give feedback on the proceedings of Zambia's review and to discuss the deferred recommendations. The stakeholders included Government institutions, the permanent Human Rights Commission and various Civil Society organisations.

I wish at this point to commend the commitment demonstrated by the Human Rights Commission and Civil Society organisations during the consultation process. They came in large numbers and contributed positively on how we can, together, uphold human rights in Zambia.

Madam Speaker, following the consultative meeting between Government and stakeholders, Zambia presented a progress report to the 37th Ordinary Session of the Human Rights Council of 19th March, 2018 in Geneva, Switzerland.

I am pleased to inform the House from a total of 203 recommendations received Zambia has now supported a total 183 and have noted a total of nineteen recommendations. Additionally, the recommendation relating to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, which had been noted, has now been fully supported. Similarly, the three Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child were totally supported. The recommendation relating to the ratification of the second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, was noted.

In light of the aforementioned changes, as I said earlier, 183 recommendations now enjoy the support of Zambia. One recommendation was partly supported and nineteen are now noted.

Madam Speaker, the recommendations which were noted and could not be supported by Zambia, were those that relate to issues such as lesbianism, gayism, bisexuality, transgender and intersex rights, as well as the issue on the ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, this was so,

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Madam because all of these require further consideration by various citizens of Zambia, and particularly through their Constitution.

Madam, the supported recommendations will form the basis for the preparation of an action plan which will be used to guide the implementation process, prior to the Fourth Cycle Review. The preparation of the action plan will also be an interactive process between the Government, Human Rights Commission, Civil Society organisations, faith based organisation and political parties. The action plan will clearly stipulate the targets and the mechanisms to achieve the effective protection and promotion of human rights in Zambia. This mechanism will be responsible for monitoring all recommendations during the Third Cycle.

Madam Speaker, the action, once completed, will complement and resonate with the implementation of the Seventh National Development Plan period (2017-2021).

Further, the action plan will also contribute to the monitoring of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals especially goal No. 16, which emphasises on the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all and building effective and accountable institutions at all levels.

Madam, I now wish to call upon all institutions to examine all the recommendations, which are listed in the report, which I shall lay on the Table of the House and work towards being fully implemented prior to Zambia's fourth cycle review.

Madam Speaker, I wish to appeal to all hon. Members of Parliament gathered here and those who have chosen to walk out and also. to appeal to all political parties, human right commission, fake-based and civil society organisations, traditional leaders and literally every citizen to compliment the Government efforts in ensuring the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by all people.

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Madam Speaker, we should be motivated by the unwavering political will, which His Excellency the President Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia has demonstrated since he assumed office in 2015.

Madam, you may recall that after signing the Constitution on the 5th January, 2016, His Excellency the President, was extremely determined to include the enhanced Bill of Rights in the Constitution (Amendment) No. 2, of 2016. Unfortunately, the Bill of Rights could not be adopted as it did not meet the required threshold. Nonetheless, His Excellency President Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu remains completely resolute on enhancing the human rights for the wellbeing of all persons without distinction as to their race, colour, sex language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin birth or whatever other status.

Madam Speaker, as I conclude, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the UN Systems, which have been unrelentingly providing support within the areas of mandate. I also wish to thank the Human Rights Commission for its checks and the civil society organisations for their dedication in sensitising members of the general public on human rights issues. In view of Zambia's determination to continue addressing the outstanding challenges that may inhibit the fulfillment of human rights, I wish to reiterate that that my appeal for the involvement of all hon. Members of Parliament in the promotion and protection of the rights of all citizens. For those, who have taken it to be a habit to criticise Zambia's human rights record, I would like to invite them to look at the report and see the recommendations that Zambia has gladly accepted.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.