



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT FOR USE BY
THE MINISTER OF GENDER
ON THE GIRL CHILD SUMMIT HELD IN ZAMBIA**

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Lusaka

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Mr Speaker,

I wish to thank you for according me this opportunity to brief the House and the Nation at large on the First African Girls' Summit which was held here in Zambia from 26th to 27th November 2015.

Zambia is a signatory to a number of International and regional Conventions and Agreements on the Rights of the Child, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). To underscore its commitment and obligations to the international and regional conventions and agreements in addressing development challenges such as teenage pregnancies and child marriages, Zambia has made considerable efforts to end this scourge by launching of the campaign in 2013 and co-sponsoring of the UN Resolution on ending, Early, Forced and Child Marriages with Canada in 2014.

In recognition of Zambia's efforts in ending child marriages, the Commission of the African Union requested Zambia to host the First Girls Summit on Ending Child Marriages in Africa which was originally supposed to have been hosted by the Republic of Niger.

Mr Speaker,

Against this background, the Government of the Republic of Zambia with the support from various partners hosted the First ever African Girls' Summit. This Summit was well attended by over 1,100 delegates from across the continent of Africa. The participants included Ministers dealing with social development issues and children affairs; First Ladies and former first ladies from Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, and Zambia; Religious and Community Leaders; youth advocates and women and girls affected or survivors of child marriage. The summit also attracted representatives from Civil Society Organisations, media from around the world, Development Partners, UN Agencies, Bilateral and Multi-lateral Agencies including celebrities who have been championing the campaign to end child marriages in Africa.

Mr Speaker,

The main objective of the Summit was to share experiences and good practices as well as challenges on ending child marriages at country, regional, continental and international levels, particularly from countries that have already launched the African Union Campaign on Ending Child Marriage in Africa. The Summit was also structured to secure and/or renew commitments from stakeholders notably governments, to invest more on ending child marriages in their respective countries. It was also a forum to discuss the successes and challenges faced by communities,

traditional and religious leaders, girls affected by child marriages as well as youths advocating against child marriages.

I am glad to report, **Mr. Speaker**, that the Summit was officially opened by the President of the Republic of Zambia, H.E. Mr. Edgar C. Lungu. The theme of the Summit was "Translating Rhetoric into Actions: Girls at Centre stage". His Excellency, in his address emphasised on the need for partnership development towards ending child marriage in Africa. He emphasised that strong partnerships should be initiated from the very inception phase of work on child marriage, and all the way to implementation and monitoring. In fact he said for Zambia he wants child marriages eradicated as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker,

The Summit also provided an opportunity for different stakeholders to question whether it was correct to refer to this union as child marriage as this is an aspect of GBV (sexual abuse). It was also the opportunity to review the role that leadership and young people can have in ending Child Marriages and Harmful Traditional Practices across the continent of Africa.

In addition, delegates had the chance to network and to share experiences (successful case studies) and good practices as well as challenges faced at country, regional and international levels. Countries that have already launched the Africa Union Campaign on Ending Child Marriage had the opportunity to share their experiences. They detailed the processes and approaches they have employed towards ending child marriages. The summit also set a stage for further cooperation among government social welfare offices across Africa, highlighting countries that have successful case studies on initiatives to end child marriages and harmful traditional practices.

Mr. Speaker, Zambia showcased traditional leaders in Zambia who have actively joined hands to vigorously fight and end early marriages in the country. His Royal Highness, Chief Madzimawe shared that he was still disheartened with the Eastern Province having the highest statistics in Zambia where prevalence rate stand at 63 percent. He highlighted the frantic efforts being made in his chieftdom to ensure that forced and child marriages were completely eradicated. He emphasized that, he also takes advantage of the various traditional ceremonies in the country to engage and dialogue with his counterparts in order to come up with various interventions on how best they can collaborate to end early child marriages.

Mr. Speaker,

Allow me at this juncture to report to the House and the nation at large the pertinent commitments and recommendations that were made and agreed upon by the stakeholders that attended the First ever African Girls' Summit on Ending Child Marriage in Africa as follows:

All the stakeholders, specifically, agreed to:

- Advocate for appropriate legislation and policies that effectively prohibit and prevent child marriages;
- Promote the Campaign to End Child Marriages in Africa and help to popularise the Common African Position;
- Encourage and support Member States to launch national campaigns to end child marriages;
- Assist Member States to develop and strengthen national strategies and programmes to end child marriages;
- Support Member States to collate data on child marriages and to strengthen national mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation towards greater accountability;
- Organise activities with communities, media, civil society organisations, foundations and the private sector to increase awareness and understanding of child marriages;
- Develop multi-sector partnerships to mobilise resources for national and community level initiatives to eliminate child marriages;
- Disseminate good practices and evidence on effective policies and programmes to end child marriages; and
- Strengthen our partnerships with communities and particularly with youth-led organisations and Civil Society Organisations.

Further, **Mr. Speaker**, all AU Member States were called upon to:

- Translate the Common African Position on Ending Child Marriage in Africa into action by establishing, funding and implementing comprehensive national action plans to end child marriages and other harmful practices;
- Establish and enforce legislation that set the minimum age for marriage at 18, and that effectively prohibit, prevent, punish and redresses child marriages, including cross-border movement of girls for child marriage purposes;
- Invest in all girls, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, in order for them to have the knowledge, education, skills and self-confidence to live full and productive lives;

- In line with AU Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals, monitor progress towards all continental and national commitments relating to ending child marriages, harmful traditional practices, and the empowerment and participation of women and girls; and
- Ensure that ending child marriage remains high on the political agenda at global, continental, regional and national levels.

Mr Speaker, our Government remains committed and open to dialogue and will welcome all progressive ideas on matters relating to ending child marriage. This will be done within the spirit of partnership between all stakeholders and the Government.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.