

**TALKING POINTS - DURING UN WOMEN MULTI-STAKEHOLDER FORUM,
THURSDAY, 25TH JANUARY 2018, 16:15 - 17:30 PM, CR1**

Excellencies;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by expressing our sincere gratitude to the UN Women for organizing this forum as part of the preparation for the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

My delegation is honoured to be part of this event and to participate on this panel discussing the **"Strengthening of laws, policies and programmes to address violence and harmful practices against rural women and girls"**.

- Many women around the world, regardless of income, age or education, are subjected to various forms of violence and other harmful practices. It cannot be over emphasised that Violence against women (VAW) and girls is a violation of their human rights and a hindrance to the attainment of gender equality.
- Violence affects all groups of women, but rural women are particularly more vulnerable.
One of the root causes of VAW is the existing inequalities between women and men. Negative attitudes and some cultural practices and stereotypes perpetuate, this cycle of violence especially in the rural areas, most beliefs and practices may encourage acts of violence.

Certain individuals are raised to think that men are superior and stronger, and need to show physical strength. The presence of such prejudices and concrete gender inequalities stimulate

discriminatory tendencies that may lead to violence. There is need to change such mindset.

- Discriminatory laws and practices also make it difficult for women and girls especially in rural areas to access land or being empowered with education, credit and other productive assets. These in turn create a power imbalance that prevents women and girls from having full control over their lives-leading women to be vulnerable and easy prey to GBV as they find themselves depending on the same perpetrators of violence for survival.
- Zambia like many other African countries is not immuned to VAW and children. Barely a day passes by without a reported case of VAW and children. The number of reported cases of VAW and children averages 50 a day, this is despite having many cases unreported;
- Child, early and forced marriage is rampant, especially for young girls, in rural areas making them more susceptible to dropping out of school. In Zambia, girls who marry young are often denied their right to education, face serious health risks including maternal mortality, sexual and domestic violence and increased vulnerability to HIV and AIDS;
- The Zambian Government being cognizant of the negative effects of VAW and children, and other harmful practices, has committed itself to the attainment of gender equality and the economic empowerment women and girls as this is critical for the overall national development.

- A conducive legislative and policy framework that addresses all forms of VAW and children has been put in place.
- The Constitution enacted on 5th January, 2016, guarantees women's human rights as it provides for progressive and gender responsive provisions. Specifically Article 23 which dealt with matters of family affairs and was very discriminatory to women has been completely removed from the newly revised and enacted Constitution.
- In the same year, 2015, Government enacted the Gender Equity and Equality Act number 22, which provides for measures to attain gender equality and the economic empowerment of women as well as the full protection of children's rights. The Act also aims to facilitate the comprehensive domestication of the provisions of CEDAW (i.e the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women).
- In 2011, Zambia enacted the Anti-GBV Act, another comprehensive piece of legislation that provides for the protection of survival for victims of Violence as well as prosecution of perpetrators.
- Statutory and customary laws on marriage are being harmonised in an effort to prohibit child marriage. A number of discriminatory and outdated statutes relating to children are also being repealed to develop a Children's' Code Bill that will ensure the full domestication of the various provisions of the Convention the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Other legislative measures being enforced to address VAW and other harmful practices include the Penal Code (Amendment)

Act No. 15 of 2005 which introduced the offence of sexual harassment, the Anti-Human Trafficking Act of 2008, the Education Act of 2011 which provides for GBV protection of employees, teachers and learners at educational institutions.

- An enabling policy environment has been created with the development and review of the National Gender Policy and the child policy, blue prints for addressing all forms of discrimination and harmful practices against women and Children.
- Harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriages are being addressed, with concerted efforts by government, NGOs, traditional leadership and the faith based organizations.
- Government in partnership with other stakeholders launched a nationwide campaign to end child marriage, which has seen the leadership and involvement of traditional leaders across the country. These have played a key role in championing the rights of girls as well as educating the communities on the negative impact of certain cultural practices and child marriage. These efforts have resulted in a 10 percentage reduction of child marriages within a seven year period.
- A five-year national strategic plan on ending child marriage is also in place, aimed at strengthening the multi-sectoral responses to reduce children's vulnerability to early and forced marriage. This strategy sets an intermediate goal of reducing child marriage rates by 40 per cent by 2020;
- With support from developing partners, government has been implementing a robust programme specifically addressing different forms of VAW. Various government institutions and the civil society are partners to this programme

- Government has also partnered with a number of civil society organisations which have greater presence in the rural areas to create positive behaviour change in order to end violence against women and children.
- Men and boys have also been brought on board to be major agents of change than to be viewed as perpetrators alone. One of the programmes aims at providing an opportunity for boys to develop into non-violent, healthy men, supported by adult mentors, healthy model masculinity and respectful, non-violent relationships.

Other administrative measures to address VAW include empowerment of women and children through provision of compulsory education to women and children, skills, land acquisition shelter and provision of startup capitals for small businesses, leaving no one behind including women and children in the rural areas.

All these measures are supported with the top leadership His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, president of the Republic of Zambia who in 2015 was crowned as a champion of the HeForShe campaign.

I thank you!