

3



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STATEMENT BY

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**SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA**

DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE ON THE TOPIC:

**PROMOTING PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE AND INCLUSIVE**  
**SOCIETIES: FIGHTING INTOLERANCE**

PREPARED FOR:

**The 146<sup>th</sup> INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION, KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN**

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## **Mr President**

Let me take this opportunity to place on record my best wishes to all the women present in this auditorium as we celebrate women on the globe in the month of March even as we march towards actualising and embracing equity as a panacea in addressing the gender parity. As Shirley Chisholm, the first female black woman to be elected to the United States Congress stated and I quote ' if they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair'. To my fellow women, Let us bring our chairs and demonstrate our capacities in all the spheres of life.

## **Mr President**

I am honoured for this opportunity to share my thoughts on the topic **“promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: fighting intolerance”**.

Distinguished delegates, an inclusive society is key to peaceful coexistence among people in every society. Therefore, it is critical for leaders to embrace diversity of ethnic, culture or religion as a way of fighting intolerance in societies.

**Mr President**

Let me hasten to state that the issue of fighting intolerance is so close to my heart as a woman, and as a person coming from a country in the Global South. This is because I have witnessed first hand of its devastating impact on my continent, which sadly, has led to deaths and displacement of many people especially women and children. In addition, it has worsened their socio-economic status. Therefore, intolerance needs to be addressed urgently with the involvement of all stakeholders.

Needless to state that some of the measures that can be undertaken to address the challenges include putting up policies aimed at reducing inequalities, facilitating interpersonal healing and promoting ideologies that build on communal identities.

**Mr President**

It is therefore imperative for parliaments to position themselves and spearhead an ambitious fight against intolerance, owing to their centrality by virtue of being representative institutions and through their legislative, oversight, and representative functions.

**Mr President**

Arising from the aforementioned, allow me now to share my Parliament's experience in fighting intolerance and give context to the matter under consideration..

Zambia is largely and predominantly heterogenous in terms of tribes or ethnic groups. Despite its diversity, the country remains a model of peace and stability in the Southern African region because it has generally undergone peaceful transitions between political regimes. However, there are some factors that have led to some degree of intolerance or exclusion which can be clustered into political, leadership contestations which can be either political or within ethnic groupings, land and boundary issues, intolerance due to poverty and inequality, among others.

### **Mr President**

To address these challenges, our Parliament takes advantage of various opportunities, uses different initiatives and parliamentary tools. One of these is overseeing the progress made in the application of national values and principles. This opportunity presents itself in the first quarter of every year when, in line with our Republican Constitution, the Republican President reports to the National Assembly on the progress the country would have made in

the implementation of these values and principles the previous year.

The Parliamentarians debate the report, highlight issues and present their views regarding the areas requiring improvement.

### **Mr President**

Through its legislative function, the Zambian Parliament has also played a critical role in creating an enabling environment for peaceful coexistence and inclusivity. In this respect, Parliament has enacted relevant pieces of legislation to promote peaceful coexistence. We have passed laws that speak gender equity, equality and integration; protecting minority persons such as the disabled; against cyber-crime; criminalisation of actions that are undertaken with the intention of raising discontent among the inhabitants; criminalisation of electoral violence, which acts as a stumbling block to some citizens, especially women and the youth; and promotion of equal opportunities in employment, among others.

### **Mr President**

Our Parliament also strives to lead by example by practising inclusiveness and peaceful co-existence. This entails having parliamentarians of different sex, age, ethnicity, occupational and educational backgrounds in our Committees, Caucuses as well as on parliamentary delegations

**Mr President**

We continue working at being more inclusive and in using different avenues to fight intolerance. These include caucuses such as the one on disability and peace. For example, the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) Zambia Chapter works at promoting a culture of peace through education, sports, arts and media, in various parts of the country. The Parliamentary Caucus on Disabilities Inclusion and Rights in Zambia is also another platform our Parliament uses to engage the disabled in our communities.

**Mr President**

Let me conclude by indicating that the importance of fighting intolerance in society cannot be overemphasised. Therefore, Parliaments are at the heart of the fight against intolerance in society. I, therefore, wish to call upon all parliamentarians to mobilise themselves with the intention of working closely with their citizens without any discrimination. By so doing, Parliaments will inspire strong leadership and political will towards the fight against intolerance in society.

*I thank you*  
~~Mr President~~

~~Lastly, let me indicate that our resolve as a country on matters of~~