

DRAFT

**OFFICIAL OPENING SPEECH BY ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF
ZAMBIA CHAIRPERSON HON. JUSTICE IRENE C. MAMBILIMA AT
THE LAUNCH OF THE FODEP HOUSE AND COMMEMORATION OF
FODEP'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY HELD ON 23RD MARCH 2007 AT
FODEP SECRETARIAT OFFICE IN LUSAKA.**

THE FODEP NATIONAL TRUSTEE (REV. SAKALA)
THE FODEP PRESIDENT (MR. MULAFULAFU)
REPRESENTATIVES OF OUR COOPERATING PARTNERS
MEMBERS OF THE PRESS
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

IT IS MY HONOUR AND PRIVILEGE TO OFFICIATE ON THIS
IMPORTANT EVENT OF THE FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRATIC
PROCESS (FODEP).

TODAY IS A SPECIAL DAY AS IT MARKS A MILESTONE IN FODEP'S EXISTENCE AND CONTRIBUTION TO ZAMBIA'S DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS.

THE ATTAINMENT OF MULTIPARTY POLITICS IN ZAMBIA WAS A NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENT, MUCH AS IT CAME WITH A NUMBER OF CHALLENGES WHICH ENTAILED ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS ESPECIALLY IN GOVERNANCE AND ELECTORAL ISSUES.

THE EFFORTS MADE BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN STRENGTHENING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY HAVE CONTRIBUTED IN RAISING AWARENESS ON THE NEED FOR POLITICAL LEADERS TO BE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS TO CITIZENS.

IN ADDITION, CIVIL SOCIETY HAS GALVANISED CITIZENS TO ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS COUNTRY.

IT IS IN THIS VEIN THAT THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF ZAMBIA WELCOMES THE BOLD AND VISIONARY STEP THAT FODEP HAS TAKEN TO ACQUIRE 'FODEP HOUSE'.

MAY I THEREFORE INVITE YOU ALL TO JOIN ME IN HEARTILY CONGRATULATING FODEP FOR ACQUIRING THIS PROPERTY DESPITE THE CHALLENGE OF RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS.

THE ACQUISITION OF FODEP HOUSE SHOULD BE SEEN AS A CONTRIBUTION IN STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS. IT IS MY CONSIDERED VIEW THAT FODEP HOUSE WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE INDEPENDENCE AND STRENGTH OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN ZAMBIA.

ELECTION MONITORING HAS BEEN FODEP'S TRADITIONAL AND CRITICAL AREA OF INTEREST. AFTER 15 YEARS OF EXISTENCE, IT CAN BE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT FODEP HAS INDEED BEEN A CONSISTENT ACTOR IN ALL MAJOR GENERAL ELECTIONS AND BY-ELECTIONS.

THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF ZAMBIA HAS NOTED WITH SATISFACTION FODEP'S ACTIVE COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL, FODEP HAS MAINTAINED A COUNTRY WIDE PRESENCE AND AN ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE.

IN THE RECENT ELECTIONS OF 2006, FODEP CHAIRED OUR NATIONAL VOTER EDUCATION COMMITTEE (NVEC) AND WAS INVOLVED IN REACHING OUT TO THE ELECTORATE IN OUR VOTER EDUCATION ACTIVITIES.

THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF ZAMBIA IS CURRENTLY RECONSTITUTING NVEC AND IT IS OUR HOPE THAT FODEP WILL CONTINUE WORKING WITH US.

LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ASSURE CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE NATION AT LARGE THAT THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF ZAMBIA WILL SOON EMBARK ON A COUNTRY WIDE EXERCISE OF CONTINUOUS VOTER EDUCATION AS PROVIDED FOR IN THE 2006 ELECTORAL ACT.

IN SO-DOING, THE COMMISSION WILL CONTINUE COLLABORATING WITH FODEP AND OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS.

IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT FODEP HAS ATTAINED REGIONAL RECOGNITION THROUGH A NUMBER OF NETWORKS AND FORUMS AS IT PARTICIPATED IN ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSIONS WITHIN THE REGION AND AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL.

GRANTED THE GOOD WORK THAT CIVIL SOCIETY HAS DONE, THERE IS STILL A LOT OF WORK THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO INVOLVE THE MAJORITY OF OUR PEOPLE IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

I THEREFORE CHALLENGE FODEP AND ITS PARTNERS TO SCALE UP ITS WORK AND DRAW ON YOUR RICH EXPERIENCES TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

THE MAJORITY OF ZAMBIANS ARE IN THE RURAL AREAS AND THAT IS WHERE OUR FOCUS SHOULD BE. I THEREFORE CHALLENGE FODEP NOT TO CONFINE ITS ACTIVITIES TO URBAN CENTRES AND THE PERI-URBAN. REACH OUT TO THE HINTERLAND AND SENSITISE THE MAJORITY CITIZENS ON THE NEED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GOVERNANCE OF THIS COUNTRY.

I CHALLENGE THE MANAGEMENT OF FODEP TO MAKE 'FODEP HOUSE' A REFUGE FOR DEMOCRACY IN ZAMBIA THROUGH ITS ADVOCACY WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES.

'FODEP HOUSE' SHOULD BECOME A FOCAL POINT AND SOURCE OF VITAL INFORMATION ON THE ELECTORAL PROCESS, ELECTION MONITORING AND OTHER ELECTION-RELATED ISSUES RELEVANT TO GOOD GOVERNANCE.

FODEP HOUSE SHOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC, THE MEDIA, ACADEMIA, THE PRIVATE AND BUSINESS SECTORS, AND EVERYONE WITH INTEREST IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS.

I AM THEREFORE IMMENSELY PLEASED AT BEING ABLE TO INAUGURATE THE 'FODEP HOUSE' WHOSE PRINCIPAL TARGET IS THE ZAMBIAN PEOPLE.

IN CONCLUSION MR CHAIRMAN, I WOULD LIKE TO URGE ALL OF US, INDIVIDUALLY AND SEVERALLY, TO PLAY OUR RESPECTIVE ROLES IN BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING ZAMBIA'S DEMOCRACY, BASED ON GOOD GOVERNANCE, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

MAY I CONCLUDE BY URGING FODEP MEMBERS AND STAFF TO REMAIN COMMITTED AND FOCUSED AS YOU ADVOCATE FOR A BETTER FUTURE FOR OUR COUNTRY THROUGH THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE.

I NOW FORMALLY DECLARE THIS HOUSE OFFICIALLY OPEN.

THANK YOU.