

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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**CTPD CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO BE MORE CONSULTATIVE ON ECONOMIC POLICY REFORMS**

The Centre for Trade Policy and Development (CTPD) calls on Government through the Ministry of Finance to consider building local consensus on the key economic reforms it plans to institute while engaging cooperating partners for technical or financial support. This is critical in getting the ‘buy in’ of the citizens, now that we are past the elections, it will be very critical for the new administration to take a more consultative approach in their work as some of the policy promises they made might need adjustments for them to deliver inclusive development.

The recently published update from the Ministry of Finance indicated that they held consultation meetings with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and that the Ministry accorded the IMF team an opportunity to share their views on the 2022 National Budget and priority economic reforms outlined in the 2022-2024 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework.

 As valuable as these discussions have been, CTPD thinks that Government should prioritize building consensus with its people on all key economic policy reforms as the people are the ones who get to live with the consequences of policy actions, good or bad. Moreover, there has been a growing debate on whether an IMF deal is inevitable for Zambia or not, as other stakeholders hold the view that we could do more to exploit local solutions to the economic challenges that we face before we look outside. Given that the ultimate bearers of any conditionalities that may characterize an IMF deal , the Centre holds the view that, consolidating local consensus on this matter would catalyze the implementation of such a program, with more support from the locals.

As things stand, the general public is unaware of what exactly the IMF’s input into the 2022 National Budget was. The public also remains in the dark on the new administration’s position on the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) formulated by the previous regime. The new government has been silent on this, and it makes the public wonder what is guiding the discussion towards economic recovery.

CTPD further urges Government to avoid giving premature statements on the state of public debt. We have observed with concern, inconsistencies in the pronouncements made by the Republican President and the Minister of Finance on the stock of public debt, with earlier pronouncements pointing to a possible hidden debt stock under the previous administration. There is need for Government to have one consolidated position informed by facts obtaining, as this is key to finding solutions to our debt crisis.

As CTPD, we reiterate our call for Government to fulfil its promises in revamping the economy and improving the standards of living for the people of Zambia as suggested in the ruling party’s campaigns. Even as they engage with stakeholders such as the IMF, they should not overlook the needs and rights of the Zambian people to be part of the consultative process. There is a need for Government to set clear and accurate measures and guidelines on how for instance, they plan on creating more jobs and running a 24-hours economy as recently pronounced. It is necessary for Government to remain transparent and engage relevant stakeholders in order to achieve an inclusive and thriving economy in the different key sectors.

**Issued by:**

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Editor’s Note

The Centre for Trade Policy and Development (CTPD) is a not- for –profit, membership based trade policy and development think tank. The organization was established in 1999 and existed as the civil society trade network (CSTNZ), until 2009 when it was rebranded as the Centre for Trade Policy and Development (CTPD).

The mandate of CTPD is to influence pro-poor trade and investment reforms at national, regional and multilateral levels as well as facilitate the participation of various stakeholders including member organizations in ensuring that trade is used as a tool for poverty eradication.

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