Vote of Thanks by the Human Rights Commission Director General, Ms. Mbololwa Wamunyima, read on her behalf by Mr. Simon Mulumbi, Human Rights Commission Manager-Human Rights Advocacy, during commemoration of International Women's Day in Lusaka on 8th March, 2025

It is always an honourable obligation for the Human Rights Commission, the country's National Human Rights Institution, to give a vote of thanks during the global celebration of women and girls on International Women's Day.

This day is extremely important because it reminds us of our obligation to uphold and protect the rights and dignity of women and girls in order to free their potential to meaningfully contribute to national development.

This year's theme: "**for all women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment**.", says it all.

The Commission acknowledges the steady progress that has been made towards promoting women and girls' rights over the past 30 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action in 1995.

One of the notable practical steps towards enhancing the promotion and protection of gender equality has been the domestication of the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) through the enactment of the Anti-Gender Based Violence Act of 2011.

In the recent past, the country has experienced accelerated social protection and empowerment programmes that continue to have a tremendous positive impact on the lives of women and girls, who are historically marginalised and underprivileged.

The introduction and implementation of the free education policy is a legacy initiative that will have a life-long empowering effect on the beneficiaries. This is particularly so for the girls who were usually sacrificed to drop out of school by their parents who could not afford to pay for school fees and requirements for both their sons and daughters.

To use the famous phrase of Mr. President, "education is an equalizer", and we can not be celebrating rights, equality and empowerment of women and girls in an environment that does not support their access to education. The Commission wishes to acknowledge this

human rights milestone achieved by the Government because education is a fundamental human right.

Further, the Commission notes that while there is evidence of notable achievements towards gender equity and equality, “progress has been uneven and substantial gaps remain”.

In order to enhance gender equity and equality, the Commission is calling for accelerated affirmative action and a human rights-centred approach to all reforms, measures and initiatives being undertaken, including various social protection and empowerment programmes.

The call by the Guest of Honour for urgent and collective efforts towards confronting the persistent challenges that women and girls continue to face, is highly encouraging and commendable.

The Commission is optimistic that, with the continued and enhanced collaboration between the Government and key stakeholders such as the Co-operating Partners, Traditional Leaders, Civil Society Organisations, particularly the Women Movement, Faith-Based Organisations, the Media and not forgetting the Human Rights Commission, the country can make substantial gains towards gender parity.

Finally, on behalf of the Commission, and indeed on my own behalf, it is my rare privilege and honour to thank the Guest of Honour for gracing this important celebration.

I also wish to thank the UN systems in Zambia through the Resident Co-ordinator and all Co-operating Partners in Zambia, for their continued and invaluable support to Zambia’s inclusive and sustainable development agenda.

Indeed, I would be failing in my duty to end the Vote of Thanks without acknowledging the courage, resilience and unwavering commitment to advancing gender equality by the Women Movement in Zambia.

I thank you all for your attendance and active participation in the 2025 International Women’s Day celebration.

Wishing you a happy Women’s Day, every day!

I thank you.