

STATEMENT BY THE AMBASSADOR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

ALESSANDRO MARIANI

**AT THE OCCASION OF THE HANDOVER CEREMONY OF COURT EQUIPMENT
TO THE JUDICIARY OF ZAMBIA**

30 NOVEMBER 2016

- **Hon. Minister of Justice, Given Lubinda**
- **Hon. Chief Justice of Zambia, Irene Mambilima**
- **H.E. German Ambassador Mr. Achim Burkart**
- **Representatives of Government of Zambia**
- **Representatives of Civil Society**
- **Representatives of the Media**
- **Dear Friends**

It is my pleasure to participate in today's handover ceremony of court equipment to the Judiciary of Zambia. I am particularly pleased to note the presence of Chief Justice Mambilima and the newly appointed Minister Lubinda with whom I have developed an excellent working relationship since my arrival in your country.

This hand-over ceremony organised today is part of the *'Programme for Legal Empowerment and Enhanced Justice Delivery'* or PLEED which has an overall value of 8.5 Million EURO grant and which is funded by the European Union and Germany

and implemented GIZ for a period of just over 4 years, aiming to ensure improved justice delivery and enhanced respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights.

As many of us know, justice is an important part of the development plans of the Government of the Republic of Zambia. Access to justice features prominently in its 'Vision 2030', specifically in objectives two and three that speak about democracy and human rights. The objectives aim to *'improve access to justice by increasing the case disposal rates; strengthening human rights awareness; and finally reduce human rights violations through effective enforcement mechanisms'*.

This specific programme is an example of very close cooperation between the EU and its Member States (namely Germany), working hand in hand with the Government and civil society. Let me therefore take this opportunity to pay tribute to the excellent work of my German colleagues at the Embassy and at GiZ.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Union is committed to enhanced rule of law and application of human rights. The European Union has been committed for many years to work with the government and other key stakeholders to support access to justice initiatives in the country. Moreover, the European Union supports a number of human rights projects focusing on access to justice in Zambia. These projects include support to survivors of gender based violence in rural areas, women's rights and access to justice, gender justice in Eastern and Western province, and making the law work for girls and boys.

I am pleased to announce that the European Union and Zambia are currently also finalising a new 25mio EUR programme to Prevent Gender Based Violence and Support Gender Based Violence survivors. Moreover, very soon, the European Union

will also launch a call for proposals targeted to civil society organisations which will promote anti-discrimination actions in Zambia.

Coming back to the ongoing PLEED, which has been up and running for a year now, I would like to take this opportunity to underline some of its achievements so far:

- Extended availability of paralegal services
- The establishment of a standardized record keeping system through a pilot project
- The development of a paralegal training curriculum in line with provisions of the draft National Legal Aid Policy.
- Planning for the scale up of legal service desks

Thanks to a baseline survey conducted by the project we know that the vast majority of Zambian citizens are not aware of paralegals and their services. Accordingly, in line with these findings, the PLEED project has worked with civil society organisations and the Human Rights Commission to raise awareness on civil and political rights as well as paralegal services. Soon we will also witness the establishment of Legal Service Units in different courts, prisons and police stations which should enhance collaboration amongst the different stakeholders and guarantee a better access to Justice for the most vulnerable.

Today we are all here to congratulate our friends within the PLEED project who have successfully procured court equipment, consisting of stenograph machines, laptops, printers and photocopying machines and software amounting to Kwacha 3, 2 million to be delivered to courts throughout the country. This equipment will assist the

Judiciary to improve the timely disposal of cases (e.g.: court reporters to support judges and speed up trials).

While we look forward to a continued strong partnership with the Ministry of Justice and the Judiciary, I wish to thank you for your attention (Zikomo Kwambiri).