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Mr. President,

I also have the honour of presenting my report on a country mission. From the 20th to the 28th of August 2009, I visited Zambia upon the invitation of its government. I take this opportunity to once again thank the Zambian government, as well as international and civil society organizations based in the country, for all the support provided to my work. I am particularly thankful to all those who generously received me in their communities and shared their experiences of struggling against the plight of extreme poverty.

Mr. President,

The Zambian Government has made clear commitments and outlined important plans to improve the conditions of the population living in poverty; and these efforts should be recognised and strongly supported. Yet, the level of implementation is insufficient to meet the immense challenges that they face. The economic progress of recent years has not translated into an improvement of the living conditions of those living in extreme poverty.

Zambia must ensure that the poorest are no longer left behind and are protected against new challenges such as the global economic crisis and the impact of climate change.

Today, the country has a variety of opportunities for consolidating important improvements that would pave the way for more inclusive development in the future. In particular, I would like to stress here, the ongoing constitutional review process. The Government must use the opportunity of the Constitution review process to improve the Zambian Bill of Rights by placing economic, social and cultural rights on an equal basis with civil and political rights.

The main thrust of my work in Zambia was to examine their social protection measures and in particular five pilot cash transfer schemes. The efforts to put social cash transfers in place must be strongly commended. Even if the amount of support offered to each household is small, their impact on the living conditions of the beneficiaries is remarkable. These initiatives play an important role in assisting the Government to comply with human rights obligation imposed by the right to an adequate standard of living and the right to social security.

I was extremely pleased to learn that the Government decided to scale-up these programs, expanding the beneficiaries in the districts where they are in place and moving progressively towards national coverage. Nevertheless, each of these projects can not make any real change if they remain isolated.

In this regard, the report underlines the crucial importance of investment in social protection and the need to increase Government involvement as a driving force in the sector. This involves consolidating initiatives in a social protection system in order to streamline budgetary allocations, establish clear leadership, improve coordination, and shore up political support.

I must stress that investing in the protection of the poor is not a choice, it is not a gesture of compassion. It is a human rights obligation agreed to by the State. Moreover, there is no trade off between promoting job creation, business activities and economic development and ensuring financial support to social protection. If we want to see economic growth changing the very unequal social structure of Zambia, if we want to see sustainable development, then investments in adequate social protection and social services should be made.

Lack of coordination between Government ministries and various donors and the lack of decentralisation of public services can seriously affect the implementation of plans. I hope all partners would use the lessons learned over the last number of years to ensure a more consistent and coordinated implementation of the Sixth National Development Plan.

Mr. Chairman,

The report also stresses the importance of participation. Public policies are not effective unless they are developed in a participative and consultative way. Civil society has a crucial role to play in the struggle against poverty. It should not only actively participate in the design of public policies but it should also be able to closely monitor and evaluate what is being done to realize human rights. The Government should continue to work in close partnership with civil society organizations and ensure that any regulatory framework for NGOs actively preserve the independence of this sector and avoid unwarranted controls and restrictions on the freedom of association.

Distinguished delegates,

The report also addresses some specific challenges faced by the country in their poverty reduction efforts. As acknowledged by the Government, corruption is a serious obstacle. Corruption disproportionately affects the poor, especially in times when resources are limited. Corruption not only obstructs economic growth and discourages foreign investment but also reduces the net income of the poor and diverts resources from investments in public services that are crucial to lift people out of

poverty. In order to effectively fight against corruption the Government must enhance its accountability mechanisms.

In such a context, ensuring the independency and capacity of anti corruption mechanisms such as the Anti-Corruption Commission is crucial. It is also important to guarantee freedom of expression and an enabling environment for civil society participation in the fight against corruption.

Finally, my report fully acknowledges that the Government faces important resource constraints and reminds the international community that it must uphold and enhance its commitments to assist Zambia. Financial and technical support plays a central role in the advancement of social protection in the country. In Zambia, however much more needs to be done by donors to ensure predictability, strengthen coordination and promote long-term sustainability of their initiatives.

I was glad to receive a very positive response from Zambian authorities to all these recommendations during my visit to the country. I intend to continue this fruitful dialogue in the follow up of my report.

I look forward to comments on these and other issues.

Thank you