



YOUTH DAY: ENHANCING NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SUSTAINABLE YOUTH PARTNERSHIP

PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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This year, Zambia celebrates Youth Day under extraordinary circumstances brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, as the virus continues to cause havoc and remains a danger to the wellbeing of all world over. **Zambia has a youthful population with a mean age of 17 years and 70% of the country's population comprising of youth.** These statistics entail that the exclusion of youths from national affairs is an exclusion of the majority in society.

Zambia celebrates this year's Youth Day under the theme: **'Enhancing National Development through Sustainable Youth Partnership'**. Central to this theme are the words 'sustainable' and 'partnership'. They speak of the need to work together both the old and young, present and future, in a manner that benefits society. This year's theme is a reminder that, **in driving our development agenda, there is need to forge partnerships with youths in all spheres of development.** It is also a call to **collective action for the youths** to take up their place in the **socio-economic space** and play their role in the development of the country.

Zambian Youth, like many young people in developing countries, are faced with many challenges. Although Government has intensified measures to improve access to education, **it is sad to note that a large number of youths are not in school, a situation that needs urgent redress if we are to see any form of genuine, sustainable development in the country.** What is even more saddening is that those who have an education are faced with **serious unemployment and underemployment standing at 21.62%.** Government has a critical role to play in **ensuring a positive and conducive environment for job creation and an enabling environment for employment opportunities.** Leadership initiatives are needed to improve the functioning of the skills marketplace and the alignment of the skills supply with employment demand. Further, partnerships among Government, educators and businesses are needed in order to create more channels for young people to move from school to work.

Despite the challenges being faced by the youth, it must be mentioned that they have been front liners in the fights against COVID-19 in the health sector as well as embraced the use of ICTs to ensure the continued provision of goods and services amidst the pandemic. PMRC wishes to acknowledge the hard work that the youths are putting in to ensure Zambians are kept safe, healthy and the wheels that have kept the country's economy running. As the country continues to develop efforts towards

the prevention and mitigation of the COVID-19 pandemic, youths must be at the centre to drive the recovery agenda. In this regard the duty also lies on the youths' shoulders to ensure that they step up to the responsibility being asked of them. **They should strive not to keep their minds idle but instead use their time productively and avoid being drivers of illicit activities like violent behavior and substance abuse.**

As a youth-led Institution, PMRC wishes all Zambian Youth a fruitful commemoration.

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