



Zambia Land Alliance

END OF 2023 PRESS STATEMENT

Another year came and has gone, and it is time for us to take stock of what transpired in the land sector in 2023. Through this statement, we'll highlight key decisions and actions that were undertaken during the year under review, and how do they affect land administration in Zambia. Land is a major source of people's livelihoods, and therefore should be administered effectively and efficiently for the benefit of all Zambians - present and future.

In 2023, the Government of the Republic of Zambia made some significant strides in improving land administration in the country. Some of the landmark achievements include the following:

1. The National Land Titling Program (NLTP) continued to gain ground with more than 40,000 titles out of a target of 60,000 issued during the period under review. Though this was below target, it is a significant progress towards enhancing security of tenure for undocumented holders of state land.
2. In the same year we saw the first ever stakeholder dialogue on business and human rights being held in Zambia, whose theme was 'Responsible Business Respect Human Rights'. The dialogue was supported by the international and local partners, and discussed human rights in the wake of land-based investments. One of the outcomes of the dialogue was the development of the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, which will guide the relationship between business and human rights, and how human rights will be protected while at the same time promoting business.
3. The launch of communication strategy which was aimed at addressing communication and information dissemination challenges by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources.
4. The Ministry of Lands further launched the Zambia Integrated Land Administration System (ZILAS) which has resulted in transitioning of most of their services to an online platform. The Ministry has since reported progress on the number of services that have been provided to the general public through the online platform.
5. Around midyear, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources informed stakeholders that they were reviewing the Lands Act of 1995 to align it with the provisions of the National Lands Policy. For years, Zambia Land Alliance has been advocating for the review of the Lands Act, as such we warmly welcome the announcement as we believe that the amendment of the Lands Act is long overdue, and will go a very long way in enhancing land administration in Zambia.
6. With support from the European Union, the Ministry of Lands recently launched the National Land Audit, and the Land Governance Facility. The National Land Audit is very crucial in informing decision-making and planning land use and management. The Land Governance Facility will support legal reforms to enhance land governance.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources has been working round the clock to change the practices and systems of land administration in Zambia. ZLA applauds the efforts by the Ministry to improve land governance and enhance tenure security in the country.

While we have noted with appreciation the positive strides by the Government highlighted above, ZLA remains seriously concerned about the following undesirable practices that were experienced in 2023:

1. Illegal land allocation that continued to take place across the country, especially on the Copperbelt. Kitwe, in particular, has become the epicenter of illegality in land administration that is being perpetrated by individuals connected to the ruling party. The Minister of Lands visited the city several times, but the problem has continued unabated.
2. During the year under review, the Ministry of lands was reported in the 2022 Auditor General's report, where a number of anomalies were documented. One of the irregularities documented was

that 85 people were offered land which they did not apply for. This is a serious concern because land allocation and acquisition procedures clearly prescribe that land should only be offered to people who apply for it. This is symptomatic of corruption in land allocation.

3. During the year, the Minister of Lands was captured on video stating that the Ministry will prioritize members of the United Party for National Development (UPND) and the poor in land allocation. This is a very sad statement which was not expected to come from the Minister of Lands, as Zambia belongs to all Zambians, and not to members of the UPND alone. Although the Republican President intervened and stated that land will be allocated to all Zambians, in the past two years, we have noted a grave disconnect between the presidential pronouncements and the reality on the ground, and we worry that the Minister's statement is what may prevail in practice. Zambians are watching the trend with keen interest.
4. During the year under review (2023), ZLA also observed that the operations of the Lands Tribunal lagged behind because for months they did not sit, thereby delaying access to justice for people affected by land conflicts. As the saying goes, "justice delayed is justice denied". There is need for the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Justice to collaborate and ensure accelerated access to justice for people with land related disputes.
5. In 2023 ZLA received unprecedented number of reports of chiefs displacing their own subjects and selling their land to people with money. The reported cases were more rampant in Mpongwe, Masaiti and Mkushi districts. This has been most disheartening as the Royal Highnesses, who are custodians of customary land on behalf of their subjects and protectors of the people have now become perpetrators of illegalities and injustice against their own people. We call upon the Government, in consultation with the House of Chiefs and other stakeholders to enact a customary land law that will stem the illegalities that have become prevalent on customary land and protect the women and poor Zambians that have become victims of the greed of their traditional leaders.

In concluding our statement, we reiterate that ZLA remains an all-weather partner of the Government of the Republic of Zambia, and we pledge to continue supporting progressive Government policies, laws and practices that are aimed at improving land governance in Zambia. As we enter the new year, we look forward to positive collaboration with the Government, the Royal Highnesses, other Civil Society Organisations, and Cooperating Partners to ensure secured access and ownership of land for all Zambians, especially the poor and vulnerable communities.

Founded in 1997, ZLA is a network of Non-Governmental Organizations advocating for fair land policies, laws and administrative systems that take into consideration the interests of the poor and marginalised. The organisation works with the poor and marginalised groups such as women, youth and persons with disabilities to promote secured access, ownership and control of land.

For and on behalf of Zambia Land Alliance,



Patrick Musole
Executive Director