

## UNPO membership-What it means for Barotseland

by Mutungulu Wanga



The admission of Barotseland to UNPO membership not only puts an international perspective to the territory's struggle for statehood through UNPO's connection with the European Parliament and the United Nations, but also places a demand on the people of Barotseland to modernize and speed-up institutional reforms and structures to a level somewhat comparable with nations from whom support for Barotseland statehood will flow.



Following admission to Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) on November 22, 2013 at the 16th Session of the UNPO Presidency which convened on the 22nd of November in Cape Town, South Africa, Barotseland formally signed the UNPO Covenant and exchanged flags with the UNPO Secretariat at the XII session of the UNPO General Assembly held in Brussels, Belgium on July 2-4, 2015, see picture inserts. Barotseland was represented by the author herein, who is also the Deputy Chairperson General of the Barotse National Freedom Alliance (BNFA) responsible for Strategy and Diaspora Liaison.

UNPO espouses five basic principles for promoting self-determination and autonomy onto which its members are bound. These are: respect for human rights; democracy; the Rule of Law; nonviolent struggle and environmental protection. UNPO members are expected to exhibit these tenets while they are still struggling for international recognition as autonomous regions within a state or, indeed, separation to a nation state as in the case of Barotseland. This is intended to inculcate into them a cultured adherence to these principles by the time they achieve their objectives so that they do not easily degenerate into the quagmire that had caused their own struggle for autonomy and/or separate statehood.

To this end Barotseland's entry into membership of UNPO inspires the territory's nationalist leadership and all compatriots committed to the achievement of Barotseland's independent statehood to enhanced and open public awareness program for the entrenchment of the Constitutional Monarch type of government, which embraces the people's desire to protect their time tested traditional structures as they embrace the tenets of parliamentary democracy. This is the commitment Barotseland has made by applying for and accepting the UNPO membership. In the meantime, by sticking to the UNPO doctrine of nonviolent and lawful civil disobedience struggle the people of Barotseland will deserve and receive the solidarity and support of all those associated with the international advocacy work of UNPO. These issues were recently elaborated during interviews on radio Lyambai and Muvi TV, and may be followed via these links. [video

width="80" height="60" mp4="http://bnfa.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/wanga-on-muvi-VID-20150717-WA0000.mp4"][/video]

The recent but belated entry of a response by the Zambian government to the petition submitted by Barotseland to the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) does not only raise the profile of Barotseland's peaceful efforts for actualization of its statehood following the collapse of the Barotseland Agreement 1964, but jilts the Zambian government into realizing the folly of suppressing legitimate political activism of Barotseland nationalists. The task before both the traditional and nationalist leadership in Barotseland is to work out effective ways of challenging the Zambian government's deceitful submission to ACHPR to the effect that there has been no suppression of human rights in Barotseland. The starting point in this respect will be mounting of civil awareness campaigns in the Barotseland territory which will be spearheaded within the UNPO doctrine of legality and nonviolence. This will be done in conformity with prevailing procedures for conducting public gatherings and processions as enshrined by Articles 20 and 21 of the Constitution and elaborated by the Public Order Act, as all these pieces of legislation do not preclude the people of Barotseland from conducting public meetings. It will be left to the Zambia government to live up to its express submissions made to the ACHPR to the effect that human rights have been and continue to be observed in Barotseland. It is also cardinal to hold that the statement by Her Honour the Vice President Inonge Wina in Parliament pledging government's commitment to pacific settlement of the Barotseland question via the African Commission for Human and Peoples Rights awaits a litmus test in the forthcoming public awareness program. [audio mp3="http://bnfa.info/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Winas-response-to-Barotse-Question.mp3"][/audio]