

## **Objection to the proposed application for inclusion of the Barotse cultural landscape on the world heritage list**

a Joint position statement from the Barotseland nationalist movements-- Barotse National Freedom Alliance and Linyungndambo

We take this opportunity on behalf of our members, the silenced and voiceless people of Barotseland, that the two major nationalist movements have given the matter of the proposed applications for the inclusion of the Barotse Cultural Landscape on the world Heritage List a care full consideration. In doing so we take cognizance that, since both the indigenous people and those who want the property have serious interests we see it as an area of conflict over resources, which conflict can cause harm and disadvantage the defenseless indigenous Barotse people. We are all aware that at implementation stage that is when differences will arise, it is at this stage when the indigenous people usually feel, they were duped. When they resist implementation they are faced with discrimination, harassment, arrests, torture and in unfortunate circumstances could lead to shooting and killing of innocent poor, poverty stricken indigenous people. It is in line with this that the proposal by Barotse Royal Establishment (BRE), National Heritage Conservation Commission (NHCC), World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a non-starter and rejected outright by the people of Barotseland.

It is important to underscore the fact that Barotseland is for all the Barotse both in the plain and in the upper land of both sides of the Zambezi River. The inhabitants in these areas must be consulted not the BRE alone. The BRE don't own Barotseland. WWF should be advised that a decision that concerns the lives of the people, bestowed with human rights by international law, calls for a consensus. We fail to understand the interest, vigor and determination of NHCC, WWF and UNESCO have to the extent where they want to impose their selfish motives on Barotseland without wide consultation and consent of the over 32 ethnic groups of Barotseland. These people own Barotseland.**IT IS OUR ANCESTRAL LAND A SOURCE OF OUR CULTURAL, SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IDENTITY AND A FOUNDATION OF OUR TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS, AND ANYBODY WHO WISHES TO UPROOT US FROM THERE, TO DESTROY OUR IDENTITY MAY TEMPORARILLY MANAGE BY HOOK AND CROOK BUT WITH TIME THE PEOPLE WILL** Claim their rights to land, territory and resources.**BAROTSELAND IS OUR HERITAGE, OUR LAND ANDTHE DECISION IS OURS—HANDS OFF BAROTSEKAND.** We do not want to fall prey to **THE PROPOSED INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE** .A critical look at it gives you an impression where the large component favors the Zambian state, for example you have an officer from fisheries, forest, livestock Agriculture etc all these departments already have controversial Zambian parliamentary acts that do not go well with the people of Barotseland. The proposed management structure incidentally has 19 members with only 7 indigenous people. What it entails is :-

**1.THE INDIGINOUS PEOPLE WILL EVENTUALLY BE LEFT OUT JN DECESION MAKING THROUGH VOTING BECAUSE THEY ARE IN THE MINORTY.**

**2. EVENTUALLY THEY WILL BE ORDERED OUT FROM THEIR LAND WHEN DEPARTMENTS ENFORCE THEIR LAWS [FOR EXAMPLE A LAW PROHIBITING OVER GRAZING WILL AFFECT CATTLE FARMERS].**

**3. THE MALOZI CULTURE, LANGUAGE WILL BE THREATENED AND GO INTO EXTINCTION. REFER TO ATTACHED DIAGRAM.**

We do not wish to fall prey to a situation where the component that award people the right to determine the disposition of The Barotse plain and natural resources largely implies that the greater majority are outsiders or the entire population of the state is entitled to involvement in resource management within the state through its political system. The resource dimension cannot however, reasonably take this form when it will be exercised by the Barotse who for the time being constitute a distinct society within the larger society of Zambia.

When the Barotse shall be left to exercise their right to self determination as peoples, it will allow them to determine within their community how resources in their distinctive territory should be managed. The Barotse people are as distinct from peoples meaning aggregate population of Zambia are entitled to freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources to ensure that they are not deprived of their own means of subsistence. These resources referred to can only be understood as referring to resources for the time being which the Barotse are specifically entitled to control as The Barotseland Agreement 1964 awards them.

It is for this reason that the two movements call upon the Zambian government, to loosen the tie between Zambia and Barotseland, by undoing the injustices some former Zambian Presidents did to Barotseland. Zambia became a cradle of true democracy in Africa on the 24<sup>th</sup> August 2021, by ushering into power the new dawn government with vibrant and meaningful ideas on democracy, respect for democratic rule of law, domestically and internationally, respect for human rights and the fight against corruption and promotion of human values. More to say the President of Zambia, on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021 in an interview entitled "A Conversation with Republic of Zambia President Hakainde" by the **INSTITUTE OF DEMOCRACY** in the United States of America on issues of democracy, he was very impressive. We are also aware that the United States President Joe Biden will host a second Democratic summit in early 2023, where some 100 countries are expected to participate. We hope that Zambia shall be invited and will contribute; hence it will offer her a unique opportunity. As nationalist movements, we urge the Zambian government to use this podium to stand up for democratic rights worldwide including the declaration for the independence of Barotseland. We believe that a violation was committed, it is not enough for the Zambian law makers to keep quiet and bury their heads in the sand and believe this conflict does not exist. Conflicts are not static, they grow. The genocide that shocked the world and claimed 800,000 human lives in April and July 1994 in Rwanda was not a day's conflict, the colonizing country was even least among major actors of genocide in that country. Resisting talking to nationalist movements in Zambia under the pretext of an imagination that they are not registered is unfortunate, and we are not securing our future properly. Zambia can follow the realistic approaches of the late Gorbachev in the Soviet Union and by Mr. De Klerk in South Africa. The Barotse want their political freedom back to determine their destiny. Barotseland has had enough oppression arising from

the hate of the Agreement. Time has now come for the two countries to sit and review this relationship. The Current Parliament which is firm on respect for human dignity could disassociate itself by boldly undoing what David Kenneth Kaunda did when he dismantled Barotseland through acts of Parliament.

After having gone through marginalization, discrimination, arrested development that led to extreme poverty and abrogation of the unitary treaty, Barotseland had no choice but to declare her independence on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012 at Limulunga. Continuous oppression on a people who have decided to break away only reminds us and the world of the sufferings of the Israelis in Egypt until GOD put his judgment EXODUS 12: 7, 12-13. We wish to advise the Zambian government to review its policy on Barotseland and also to refrain from hurting the people of Barotseland by being so insensitive and dismissive of their inalienable rights. Let us not harass people but address the ideas, harassing people does not kill the idea of demand for freedom. The path of harassing opposition political leaders has been tried by some governments, but it just brought shame on them when elections came on the scene. Talking as peaceful and as civilized people is essential and cardinal. Together we can solve this issue. Discrimination and oppression is painful to experience. It is important to note that none of us can guarantee, what the next generations will do, they may take more drastic action too ghastly to contemplate.