



**Joint Oral Statement on the adoption of Zambia's Universal Periodic Review
Working Group Report.**

37th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

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Delivered by Federica Fabiano

Mr President, the Zambia Council for Social Development and CIVICUS welcome the government of Zambia's engagement with the UPR process. We also welcome the government's presentation of the Access to Information Bill to Parliament, recognising that it has yet to be enacted.

However, in our joint UPR Submission, we documented that since its last review, Zambia has not implemented 3 of the 4 recommendations relating to civic space. The existing legal frameworks that impedes and restricts civic space, including the Public Order Act and the Non-Governmental Organisations Act remain in place and have not been amended or repealed since Zambia's last UPR examination.

The NGO Act unduly restricts the participation of civil society through punitive sanctions for non-compliance and excessive discretion of the State to dictate the activities of CSOs. Similarly, we are concerned with the continued use of the Public Order Act to unwarrantedly limit the exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

Civic space came under serious threat during the State of Emergency declared by the government in July 2017. Six activists are currently before the courts after being arrested in September 2017 following a peaceful protest held outside of parliament demanding accountability for government expenditure.

Several journalists have also been arraigned before the courts to answer charges related to publication of official secrets, defamation and being in possession of seditious materials. After the 2016 general elections three private Broadcasting stations had their licences suspended due to perceived support for the opposition.

Mr President, CIVICUS and ZCSD call on the Government of Zambia to take proactive measures to address these concerns and implement recommendations to create and maintain, in law and in practice, an enabling environment for civil society.

We thank you.