# BNNB Statement 16th July, 2021

# Increased Inflation amidst COVID-19 Compromising Access to Basic Needs

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) Basic Needs and Nutrition Basket (BNNB) for a family of five living in Lusaka in June 2021 stood at K8, 489.48 moving from K8, 442.24 in May**,** a K47.24 increase. The movement in the basket is attributed to price movements in items such as chicken which increased by K35 for 5kg moving from K255.71 to K290.71. The price of 3 trays of eggs went up by K18.07 to K173.57 from K155.50 and 14kg of other fruits went up by K9.32 moving from K422.59 to K431.91. From the non-food but essential items, the price of charcoal increased by K79.20 moving from K640.80 to K720. Notable decreases were however noted in some food items. A kg of kapenta reduced by K43.33 from K290.99 to K247.66, 1kg pounded groundnuts moved from K74.49 to K39.36 a decline of K35.13, the price of 3kg of beans reduced by K18.07 from K139.04 to K120.48, 4kg of rice reduced by K16.57 from K102.79 to K86.19 and the price of 4kg of onion reduced by K12.12 moving from K79.04 to K67.02.

The noted price changes in charcoal is attributed to increased energy demand given the cold season without a corresponding increase in supply. Additionally, the sustained upward price movements in poultry products such as chicken and eggs is attributed to a heightened cost of production given the economic context. With only a month left before the August 2021 poll, the nation has been hit by the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The month of June saw an increase in daily new COVID-19 cases, a rise in the average daily admitted cases to above 200 patients, escalation in cases under community management to over 19000 patients and a surge in the number of deaths due to COVID-19 and COVID-19 associated complications. This has consequently exerted pressure on both the public health system as well as households. A further increase in year on year inflation rate to 24 percent (as reported by ZamStats) was also recorded.

An upward trajectory in commodity prices erodes the purchasing power of individuals and households thereby compromising their access to basic needs such as nutritious foods, health care, water and sanitation among others. The onset of the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic also presents additional household expenditures. This has further exacerbated the plight of the most vulnerable and marginalised. JCTR does appreciate efforts government is making to address the nation’s challenges. We also recognise that a few commodities may be cheaper compared to other countries in the region. Notwithstanding these factors, the nation is undeniably faced with key socio-economic issues that need urgent solutions. Of concern to JCTR is the fact that the high cost of living (for basic essentials) in Zambia is beyond the reach of many Zambians. This is on account of a difficult socio-economic context characterised by high poverty, high unemployment and low income levels among others.

JCTR therefore continues to emphasise that it is pertinent for all voters to scrutinise the messages that different political leaders are advancing as they campaign for election in the August poll to see if they are addressing these economic challenges. Sustainable and workable solutions to the nation’s challenges should be core to various campaign themes with emphasis on upholding the common good and the dignity of every Zambian. JCTR further urges the government to not only enforce the existing COVID-19 guidelines but also garner its mobilisation efforts to secure adequate vaccines for all Zambians irrespective of social or economic status. This is imperative for the nation’s economic recovery.

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