

BNB Press Statement

18th April, 2018.

High cost of living injurious to human dignity

The Lusaka Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection Basic Needs Basket for 2018 has continued to record high cost of living for a family of five. The increase in cost of living for March was attributed to poor rainfall patterns, extension of the fish ban, reduced supply of agriculture products on the market and high fuel prices. JCTR is worried that commodity prices are increasing every month at a very fast rate and this is preventing people from living a dignified life. High cost of living is causing suffering on the poor as many are unemployed and have no reliable source of income to afford the continued price increase of basic needs. According to the Central Statistics Office the annual inflation rate for March 2018 increased to 7.1 percent from 6.1 percent in February 2018. The increase in the annual rate of inflation was attributed to price fluctuations in both food and non-food items. This therefore confirms the March 2018 JCTR Basic Needs Basket (BNB) increase.

The **March 2018 JCTR Basic Needs Basket (BNB)** for a family of **five** living in **Lusaka** stood at **ZMW5,575** which was **ZMW190** more than the **February BNB** which stood at **ZMW 5,385**. The most significant increase was noted in **Dry Fish** which increased by **ZMW27** from **ZMW111** in **February** to **ZMW138** in **March** per **kg** of fish. A **25kg** bag of **Mealie meal** increased by **ZMW9** from **ZMW67** in **February** to **ZMW76** in **March**. **Kapenta** increased by **ZMW 20** from **ZMW217** in **February** to **ZMW 237** in **March** per **kg**. **Tomatoes** increased by **ZMW11** from **ZMW15** in **February** to **ZMW26** in **March** per **kg**.

The above noted increments and price fluctuations can be attributed to the extension of the fish ban which led to prolonged reduction in supply of fish and Kapenta on the market. This prompted traders to increase prices of these two commodities. Changes in the rainfall pattern caused a variety of problems for producers. Cases of high rainfall in some places caused devastation losses of crops which led to reduced supply of tomatoes and onion on the market. The stock of maize on the market reduced and this led to increase in mealie meal prices. The increase in fuel prices also led to increased production costs for millers which triggered prices for mealie meal to increase.

JCTR is concerned with the continued increase in prices of basic commodities on the market. The Centre therefore urges government and other key stake holders to create opportunities that promote inclusive growth and Jobs that will narrow the gap between cost of living and salaries for the majority of Zambians so that they can afford the standard of living. JCTR further urges government to actualize the Seventh National Development Plan by Promoting the agriculture sector and moving the economy away from its over-reliance on traditional products and exports, such as copper and cobalt. This is because increased agricultural output will increase variety of foods and so reduce the prices of foods on the market. In addition, Government should invest more in the agriculture sector through research, skills development and education. This will improve productivity in the country and ensure that crops like maize, tomatoes and onions are produced in large quantities to avoid shortages.

Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection, P.O. Box 37774, 10101 Lusaka, Zambia Tel: 260-211-290-410 Fax: 260-211-290-759 E-mail: basicjctr@jesuits.org.zm Website: www.jctr.org.zm
Location: 3813 Martin Mwamba Road, Olympia Park, Lusaka