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Norwegian Embassy
Dar es Salaam



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Dares Salaam

Joint speech in Commemoration of International Human Rights Day

10th December 2020

By H.E Adrian Fitzgerald, Chargé d’Affaires, Embassy of Ireland

The guest of honour, Honourable Joseph Sinde Warioba former Prime Minister and members of the high table; Chairperson of the LHRC Board of Directors, Retired Chief Justice Barnabas Samatta,

LHRC Executive Director, Ms. Anna Henga,

Representatives from government institutions,

Representatives from missions accredited to Tanzania,

Representatives from civil society, and educational institutions,

Distinguished delegates,

Habari za asubuhi.

Mabibi na Mabwana,

I am honoured to speak to you this morning on behalf of three development partners – Embassies of Ireland, Sweden and Norway – that provide core funding and Embassy of Switzerland and all donors to the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC).

This year’s International Human Rights Day is taking place at a time when the world is fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. This disease, which is unprecedented in our lifetime, has caused a great loss of human life and suffering, and exposed not

only the vulnerability of our health systems, but also of our human rights protection systems.

The global theme for this year's International Human Rights Day is, *"Build back better: Stand Up for Human Rights."* It is a call for a deep reflection on how the world can emerge stronger, and better from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is an invitation, to all of us, to reflect on the centrality of human rights, and advocate for their promotion and protection in all we do to build back better.

Our host today, the Legal and Human Rights Centre, has adapted the global theme to reflect the dynamics of our context here in Tanzania. Therefore, the theme of our commemoration today is, *"Development is a right: Stand up for Human Rights."*

Mabibi na Mabwana;

Perhaps no other leader has shaped the discourse on Tanzania's development trajectory more than the late Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the founding father of this nation. For him, development had to be *human-centred*, and had to focus on enhancing *human dignity* – yaani '**Utu wa Mtu**'. A respected Tanzanian scholar – Professor Issa Shivji, has recently shown that, for Mwalimu Nyerere, the idea of human dignity is inseparable from the idea of equality.

Human rights constitute the basis for human dignity, and equality. They are indivisible, and universal. The global human rights framework embodies such important values as fairness, dignity, participation, freedom, and accountability. The obligation of protecting, and promoting these values belongs to all of us – you and I – we are all obliged to be human rights defenders.

Mabibi na Mabwana;

Tanzania held its general election more than a month ago. Voting was generally peaceful in most parts of the country. Sadly, there were incidences of violence with tragic loss of human lives, mainly in Zanzibar, and allegations of irregularities were made by opposition parties. As Tanzania's long standing development partners, we encourage the authorities to conduct a full investigation into all substantive allegations to avoid repetition in the future and to strengthen transparency and accountability. We also urge the authorities to pursue a path of dialogue with all parties, with the intention of arriving at an inclusive and constructive solution.

It is important for all stakeholders to reflect on, and learn from the 2020 general election. This election saw a low turnout, especially among the youth who constitute the majority of the population. This should be an issue of concern for all of us as the youth are our future and the future of a stable and prosperous Tanzania. The consequences of increasing apathy and frustration among the youth can be detrimental for society as a whole. Young people must be educated and motivated to participate in the democratic process and to respect Human Rights.

It is our view that, the failure to accredit experienced and reputable Civil Society Organizations, such as the Legal and Human Rights Centre, affected the provision of voter education, which is so important for youth participation. We urge all stakeholders, to play their role in ensuring that youth – who constitute the majority in this country – are able to participate in the democratic process and contribute in shaping a peaceful and prosperous future of this beautiful country.

Mabibi na Mabwana;

The Global COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder of the need to ensure that our development processes remain human-centred and retain a dual focus on

equality for all, and leave no one behind. This is a challenge for all nations, including Tanzania.

A growing body of evidence, from different parts of the world, suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a broad range of unwanted effects, such as hundreds of thousands unemployed people, more prevalence of gender-based violence, a spike in teenage pregnancies, a weakening of health systems, and a concentration of political power. As we reflect on the need to *build back better*, and in a manner that places human rights at the centre of the recovery process, we must ensure that we build a more transparent, accountable and inclusive society. We have an opportunity to ensure that respect for Human Rights underpins the recovery efforts in Tanzania.

Mabibi na Mabwana;

I would like to highlight two important things;

Firstly, Standing Up for human rights, as this year's theme urges us to do, is not easy. It is a role, and commitment that is regrettably associated with a lot of personal and institutional risks. Human rights are under threat across the world, mainly because of a global decline in democratic values. This trend is taking place in developed, and in developing countries. It is the obligation of every human rights defender to stand up for human rights. The individual and collective freedoms provided to us by our democratic values and respect for human rights are worth protecting – every day – by each, and every one of us.

As donors – we would like to applaud LHRC for being consistent and deliberate in its determination to promote and protect human rights. It is sheer determination and courage that allowed LHRC to celebrate 25 years of its existence in September this year. This is a remarkable achievement, and we would like to reaffirm our support for the important work that LHRC is doing.

Finally, and most importantly, Standing Up for human rights is unfortunately difficult, and risky – and therefore deserves recognition, and encouragement. We are aware that later today, LHRC will unveil the winner of the **Maji Maji Human Rights Award**, a notable recognition that takes place only once in five years. It is our hope that this important recognition will send a clear message that standing up for human rights is a noble endeavour and that such efforts will inspire many more Tanzanians to join the cause of promoting and protecting human dignity and equality.

Let us all stand up for human rights!

Thank you for listening.