

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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The proposed constitutional amendments, championed by President Hakainde Hichilema's (2021-present) administration spark intense debate ahead of the 2026 general election with civil society strongly pushing back against the reforms. A former finance ministry official, Grandy Ntumbo, says he has been targeted under Hichilema's administration for sounding the alarm on alleged misuse of government funds, exposing gaps in the president's anti-graft drive. The Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) announces plans to take legal action against China-headquartered Sino Leach Metal Zambia following an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on the pollution of the Kafue River and surrounding areas.

Civil society pushes back against constitutional amendments

Zambia's proposed constitutional amendments, championed by President **Hakainde Hichilema's** (2021-present) administration, have sparked intense debate ahead of the 2026 general election. While the government has framed the reforms as necessary for equitable governance and inclusive representation, a coalition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society groups (CSOs), and religious leaders have mounted significant opposition, arguing the amendments are rushed, politically motivated, and divert attention from more pressing socio-economic issues.¹

There are 13 proposed amendments, including:

- Delimitation of constituencies designed to equitably distribute the constituency development fund, considering size and population;
- Removal of the two-term limit for mayors and council chairpersons;
- Re-integration of members of parliament into local councils;
- Expiration of members of parliament (MPs) tenure and ministers' positions three months before a general election;
- Increase the number of nominated MPs.²

A statement released by a coalition of 19 CSOs on 4 April denounced the reforms, arguing that proposals such as removing the constitutional cap of eight nominated MPs has the potential to undermine the country's democracy while proposals such as increasing the number of MPs demand conversations about how to improve representation and accountability and transparency in the work of current elected representatives.³

The main argument against the amendments is the government's expedited approach to the constitutional reform. Prominent CSOs, including **Transparency International Zambia** and the **Chapter One Foundation**, have rejected the process as "undemocratic" and exclusionary, demanding that amendments be postponed until after the 2026 elections.⁴ The CSOs accuse the

¹ Sun FM, 45 Apr 2025

² ZNBC, 26 Mar 2025

³ Diamond TV, 5 Apr 2025

⁴ Lusaka Times, 14 Mar 2025

government of sidelining stakeholders such as parliament, religious bodies, and grassroots communities, with consultations limited to a select group.

Zambia Council for Social Development secretariat **Leah Mitaba** criticised the delimitation exercise, a key component of the amendments, as a superficial effort to expand parliamentary seats under the guise of gender and youth inclusion, rather than a genuine review.⁵ Opposition parties and analysts have also said the reforms are strategically timed to favour the ruling **United Party for National Development (UPND)** in the 2026 elections. Opposition **Socialist Party** secretary general **Cosmas Musumali** claims the delimitation exercise is being rushed to create new seats in UPND strongholds, a move he says is aimed at securing electoral advantage by the ruling party.⁶ The government has also had to dismiss reports that as part of the constitution amendments it plans to change the presidential tenure of office and the presidential election winning threshold of 50 plus one vote. The government called these reports propaganda.

Zambia's economic turmoil has intensified opposition to the reforms. With inflation above 16%, a cholera outbreak affecting thousands, and over 60% of citizens living in poverty, NGOs argue the government's priorities are misplaced. Yet, Hichilema has dismissed accusations of ulterior motives, framing delimitation as essential for equitable development after a decade of neglect. He insists the reforms aim to empower marginalised groups, including women and youth, through measures like percentage-based caps on nominated legislators.⁷

NGOs and opposition groups view the amendments as a litmus test for democratic integrity, fearing that rushed changes could entrench authoritarian tendencies—which they say is evident in recent crackdowns on dissent and judicial interference.⁸ The outcome of this dispute is expected to shape not only the 2026 elections but also the trajectory of Zambia's democracy.

Whistle-blower exposes gaps in Hichilema's administration anti-graft drive

Former finance ministry official **Grandy Ntumbo** has reported that the Hichilema administration has targeted him for exposing alleged misuse of government funds despite Hichilema winning the 2021 elections on a zero tolerance for corruption campaign. Ntumbo, who acted as a whistle-blower on alleged theft at both the education and finance ministries in 2021, told the high court in April that finance ministry officials subjected him to repeated intimidation, and he was pushed out of a safe house.⁹

Ntumbo made a legal submission in early 2023 against Zambian authorities, explicitly citing the initiation of disciplinary proceedings against him, the non-payment of his salary, and the failure to provide him with safe and secure housing. Ntumbo has argued that these actions were unjust and a consequence of his whistleblowing and failure to properly apply the whistleblower protection laws. He has requested interim relief by asking that the disciplinary measures be stayed, his salary be paid and that he be relocated to a safe house, thereby ensuring his protection while the merits of his case are examined.

The high court ordered in December 2023 that the disciplinary actions remain suspended, the applicant's salary be paid, and that the **Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC)** provide Ntumbo relocation to a safe house during the judicial review process.¹⁰ To date, against the orders of the court, Ntumbo still has not been provided with an alternative safe house or been paid the back

⁵ Lusaka Times, 14 Mar 2025

⁶ Zambia Monitor, 6 Nov 2024

⁷ ZBNC, 13 Apr 2025

⁸ Bloomberg, 14 Sep 2024

⁹ Bloomberg, 4 Apr 2025

¹⁰ Zambian Observer, 5 Apr 2025

salary he is owed in a development he says reveals the lack of seriousness in the fight against corruption in the current administration.

Hichilema, who Ntumbo says he wrote to directly, has not commented and government agencies have ignored court orders that would have brought some relief to the whistle-blower. Prosecutors have also not yet brought the finance ministry officials investigated in relation to the allegations to court despite them being arrested two years ago.¹¹

While Zambia has improved its relations with foreign investors, Ntumbo’s allegations suggest that there is a long way to go before trust is fully restored in the willingness of the government to crack down on graft.¹² The Zambian government has constantly presented the fight against corruption as a priority and recent rankings by **Transparency International** appear to show a gradual improvement.

TI CPI Rankings for Zambia ¹³					
	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020
Ranking	92/180	98/180	116/180	117/180	117/180
Score	39	37	33	33	33

Government takes legal action against miner for pollution

The **Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA)** has announced plans to take legal action against **China**-headquartered **Sino Metals Leach Zambia** following an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on the pollution of the **Kafue River** and surrounding areas. ZEMA has also issued an **Environmental Restoration Order (ERO)** to the mining firm after its tailing dams were breached last month, contaminating the river and other streams in **Copperbelt Province**.¹⁴ Sino Metals Leach Zambia would be required to compensate communities along the affected rivers and streams once the evaluation process is concluded.

Contrary to government’s earlier statements that the pollution in the Kafue River has been contained, fisheries and livestock minister, **Peter Kapala**, confirmed in a statement on 3 April that the river remains severely polluted. The 18 February spill has caused extensive damage to aquatic life, disrupted local livelihoods, and continues to pose a serious public health risk. Kapala described the situation as an ecological disaster that threatens the river’s role as a vital source of food and income for over 300,000 households reliant on fisheries.¹⁵

Government scientists from the **Central Veterinary Research Institute (CVRI)** and the **University of Zambia’s School of Veterinary Medicine** have reportedly confirmed that heavy metal contamination in the river had exceeded the safe limits set by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and the **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)**.

¹¹ Bloomberg, 4 April 2025

¹² PPLALF, 4 Apr 2025

¹³ Source: Transparency International’s [Corruption Perception Index](#). Countries with a low score, nearer to zero, are calculated to be more corrupt than countries with a high score, nearer to 100

¹⁴ Zambia Monitor, 31 Mar 2025

¹⁵ Zambia Monitor. 4 Apr 2025

The Sino Laech Metals pollution case comes after fellow Chinese company **Zhixing**'s mine has been closed due to serious pollution issues after its tailings dam was found to be polluting the environment (*see ARC Briefing Zambia Mar 2025*).¹⁶

The recent pollution cases involving Sino Metals Leach Zambia and Zhixing underscore the urgent need for a shift towards sustainable mining practices in the Copperbelt as local communities are increasingly vocal about their concerns, highlighting the direct link between mining activities and environmental degradation.

Planner

21 May 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Bank of Zambia** (central bank) **Monetary Policy Committee** decision

May 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) International Monetary Fund (IMF)** mission for the fifth review of Zambia's **Extended Credit Facility (ECF)**

Jul 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** Mid-year budget review

Chronology

13 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) ZNBC**. Energy minister **Makozo Chikote** says the government has reduced the approval period for solar project applications from over six months to 2 days as the country targets to add 1,000MW of solar energy to the national grid by the end of 2025;

11 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Reuters**. Zambia will resume construction of the **Zambia-Tanzania Interconnector Project** with estimated completion in 2028, **Achim Fock**, country manager for Zambia at the **World Bank**, said during a signing ceremony;

10 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers**. Zambia and **Ghana** host talks to discuss visa waivers and facilitating greater movement of tourists and investors between the countries;

10 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers**. National assembly speaker **Nelly Mutti** declares the **Lumezi** parliamentary seat, held by **Munir Zulu**, vacant after the legislator was sentenced to 12 months imprisonment for making defamatory remarks against finance minister **Situmbeko Musokotwane** and his infrastructure counterpart **Charles Milupi**;

8 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) APA News**. **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** confirms it will hold an inter-ministerial task force meeting on Friday to tackle challenges at the **Kasumbalesa Border Post** between the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** and Zambia;

8 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor**. Workers at the **Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority (TAZARA)** have threatened to down tools within 48 hours if the Zambian government fails to settle five months of outstanding salary arrears;

8 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) ZNBC**. Agriculture minister **Reuben Mtolo** says the government has concluded bilateral negotiations with the **South African** government on the export of fresh avocado fruits and that the ministry is working with farmers to ensure they meet the export conditions stipulated in the agreement;

7 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) ZNBC**. President **Hakainde Hichilema** says the government is targeting to generate one gigawatt of power this year, adding that in the next five years, the government is aiming to generate ten gigawatts of power;

¹⁶ ZNBC, 4 Mar 2025

5 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers.** **CNMC Luanshya Copper Mine PLC** chairman **Li Zhan Yan** says the company is planning to invest over \$700m into Shaft 28, of which \$100m has been spent;

4 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** Permanent secretary in the commerce, trade and industry ministry **Lillian Bwalya** says the government has launched the **Border Development Strategy**, an initiative aimed at enhancing trade facilitation, upgrading border infrastructure, and fostering economic growth in border communities;

4 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** Fisheries and livestock minister, **Peter Kapala** says that the **Kafue River** remains severely polluted following an acid and heavy metals spill from a broken tailings dam at **China** headquartered-**Sino Metals Leach Zambia Ltd** in **Kalulushi**;

4 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) ZNBC.** President **Hakainde Hichilema** says two **Chinese** companies, **Anhui Gangtai Manufacture Group**, and **China Railway Rollingstock Corporation**, have held a series of engagements with the government on upgrading and modernising Zambia's railway system;

2 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Africa Mining Market.** **Canada**-headquartered **Ivanhoe Mines** confirms the **Zambian** government granted it a 7,757-square-kilometre package of exploration licences in **North-Western Province**;

2 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** **Singapore**-based commodity trader, **Trafigura** reportedly files a request for arbitration under the **London Court of International Arbitration (United Kingdom)** rules against Zambia's majority state-owned **ZCCM Investment Holdings (ZCCM-IH)** over a copper prepayment deal dating back to 2021;

1 Apr 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Diggers.** Army commander Lieutenant General **Geoffrey Zyelee** hosts **Namibian** defence force chief Air Marshall **Martin Kambulu Pinehas** to discuss strengthening ties between their defence forces;

31 Mar 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Bloomberg.** Finance minister **Situmbeko Musokotwane** says Zambia's inflation has finally peaked after debt restructuring and a historic drought sent prices soaring, indicating that annual consumer price growth - which edged 0.3% lower to 16.5% in March - is headed below 10%;

29 Mar 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** Mines and minerals development principal public relations officer, **Shamwinda Tembo** says government projects that 70% of the countrywide high-resolution aerial geophysical survey will be completed by 31 December 2025;

28 Mar 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** The **Zambia Association of Manufacturers (ZAM)** raises concerns over the **Tobacco Control Bill of 2025**, warning that its implementation could put 38,000 farmers at risk of losing their livelihoods;

26 Mar 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Lusaka Times.** Water development and sanitation minister **Collins Nzovu** says the government has initiated a research study on the potential transfer of water from the **Luapula River** to the **Kafue River**, a move aimed at addressing the country's persistent drought challenges;

25 Mar 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia) Zambia Monitor.** The **Tanzania Electric Supply Company (Tanesco)** and Zambia's **Kanona Power Limited** are reportedly in discussions over a groundbreaking electricity trade agreement that could see Tanzania exporting power to Zambia and beyond;

24 Mar 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Reuters*. Zambia's **Copperbelt Energy Corp.** says it will invest \$500m over the next two years to increase solar power output and double the capacity of a power transmission line to **the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**;

21 Mar 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Diggers*. Power utility, **ZESCO Ltd** attributes the prolonged power outages in some parts of the country to ongoing maintenance works at **Maamba Energy**, which has resulted in a loss of 150MW;

21 Mar 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Zambian Monitor*. Government signs an Inter-Utility Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Mozambique** for a project designed to significantly increase transmission capacity within the **Southern Africa Power Pool** through a Mozambique-Zambia interconnector;

19 Mar 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Diggers*. Mines minister **Paul Kabuswe** says the two gold marketing centres that the government is constructing in **Mumbwa** and **Rufunsa** districts will be completed within this year;

17 Mar 2025 **Lusaka (Zambia)** *Diggers*. **Australia**-based **Prospect Resources** announces it has been granted a pair of 25-year large-scale mining licences covering its **Mumbezi** copper flagship project in the **Copperbelt**.

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