



TREES. WATER. LIFE. OUR FUTURE

## PROTECTING ZAMBIA'S NATIONAL FOREST RESERVES

Zambia's Forests Act of 2015 recognises forests as central to sustainable development, climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation. Even so, Zambia's National Forest Reserves are facing an unprecedented threat from deforestation and forest degradation which would bring devastating long-term economic and social consequences.



### THE ECONOMIC COST

#### Key Drivers of Deforestation:

- Agricultural expansion
- Heavy reliance on wood fuel (charcoal and firewood)
- Unsustainable timber extraction
- Mining and infrastructure development

#### Economic Costs:

- Loss of livelihoods and jobs in the Agricultural sector which supports over 70% of Zambia's population.
- Water insecurity affecting Zambia's hydro-power output impacting businesses and homes across the country.
- National Food Security reduced as agricultural production affected by climatic impacts of deforestation.
- Reduced investment in agricultural sector due to increased uncertainty and risk.



"If we tackle deforestation in the right way, the benefits will be far-reaching – greater food security, improved livelihoods for millions of small farmers, and indigenous people, more prosperous rural economies, and above all, a more stable climate."

**Paul Polman**

founder of Imagine

### BACKGROUND

Zambia's National Forest Reserves are some of the nation's most important natural assets. These forests were designated as National Reserves to ensure the sustainable utilisation of forest resources and to conserve the biodiversity, ecosystem services and water catchment areas they provide (*The Forests Act No. 4 of 2015*).

Forests absorb carbon and stabilise the climate. Their roots prevent soil erosion and enrich soils. The forest ecosystem creates clouds that bring rain and stores water to fill our rivers and through these processes forests create the conditions necessary to grow crops to feed the population and support agribusiness. Protecting Zambia's forest reserves is less about protecting trees and more about protecting Zambian lives, livelihoods, the economy and national food security.

### THE VALUE OF NATIONAL FORESTS

#### Economy and Livelihoods

National Forest Reserves play a critical role in Zambia's economy. Their role in the water, soil and nutrient cycles is essential to agricultural production which supports the livelihoods of 72% of Zambia's population (*FAO*).

#### Food Security

Forests not only provide food such as mushrooms, fruits and honey but ensure the climatic conditions necessary to grow crops. Even partial deforestation changes the amount and distribution of rainfall and increases uncertainty and risks for food production (*Climate Policy Initiative*).

#### Biodiversity

Forest Reserves are home to 80% of the world's land-based plants and animals (*WWF*). This biodiversity is essential for pollination, seed dispersal and soil fertilisation - all key elements in agricultural production.

#### Water

Forests play a key role in perpetuating the water cycle and supply over 75% of the world's fresh water (*World Bank*). When this role is disrupted by deforestation the result is increased drought and desertification.

#### Carbon

Forests capture and store carbon. This not only helps to mitigate the effects of climate change but is a potential asset in the form of carbon credits which could be used to fund forest protection and sustainable livelihood opportunities for communities living around forest reserves.