

Decentralization Reforms in Zambia 1991-2010

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ABSTRACT On 17th December 1990, the Third Republic was born in the wake of elections that swept the United Independent party (UNIP) and President Kenneth David Kaunda from power after 27 years and replaced it with the Movement for Multi - party Democracy (MMD) led by Fredrick Chiluba, thereby ushering in the Third Republic and political pluralism based on decentralized governance. This paper explores the progress made in implementing Zambia's Decentralization programme during the Third Republic between 1991 and 2010. An important critical component of the decentralization reforms involved the transfer of responsibilities from the central to the local government with the objective of improving efficiency and accountability, as well as the responsiveness of state agencies to local. The paper argues that while the reforms have brought about significant changes in the policy framework and institutional structure of the provincial, district and local governance, challenges still persist. This state of affairs could be attributed to, for the most part, to the centralizing tendencies characteristic of the one-party state era. As a consequence, the Governments' commitment to transfer functions with matching resources to the district and local level in order to anchor effective democratic, participatory and responsive local governance has yet to be realized.