



REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

NATIONAL ADDRESS

BY HIS EXCELLENCY

**DR. LAZARUS McCARTHY CHAKWERA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

KAMUZU PALACE, MALAWI

23RD MARCH 2024

Fellow Malawians,

Over the past twelve months, I have been conducting a tour of the country, visiting as many districts as possible from Nsanje to Chitipa and from Mchinji to Likoma Island, to see for myself how Malawians are faring against the harsh blows of climate change. One clear message I have heard from Malawians in all three regions of our country is that even though Government has distributed a lot of food to reduce food insecurity, there is still a significant number of Malawians who do not have enough food.

As a case in point, when I heard last month that parts of the northern region that had experienced dry spells a year ago were once again suffering the effects of El Nino weather this year, I went there to assess the situation, and in the displacement camps I visited, food insecurity was number one the list of needs. As an immediate relief, I ordered the Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) to provide emergency food items to those camps, but the people there had already told me that the food insecurity extends beyond the camps. So to establish just how many

places in Malawi were experiencing dry spells and how many Malawians are in need of relief, I directed the Ministry of Agriculture to work with other agencies, including the Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services, the United Nations, DoDMA, and District Councils in evaluating the full extent and impact of El Nino conditions on our country and to give me a report.

It is on the basis of this report that I stand before you tonight, by the powers conferred upon me by Section 37(1) of the Disaster Risk Management Act (2023), to declare a State of Disaster in 23 out of Malawi's 28 districts affected by El Nino conditions. This declaration is effective today, 23rd March 2024, and applies to the following districts: Nsanje, Chikwawa, Blantyre, Thyolo, Mulanje, Phalombe, Chiradzulu, Zomba, Machinga, Mangochi, Balaka, Mwanza, Neno, Lilongwe, Mchinji, Ntcheu, Salima, Dowa, Dedza, Ntchisi, Kasungu, Nkhotakota, and Karonga. Apart from the late and erratic onset of rains, these districts have experienced inadequate rains, floods, and prolonged dry spells, which have severely damaged crops and the prospects of food production. Our preliminary assessment is that close to 2 million farming households have been

affected. Specifically, 749,113 hectares of maize have been affected, representing 44.3 percent of the national crop area. Other important crops like rice, soya beans, cowpeas, and groundnuts have also been affected, as the full report from the Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) will show when it comes out.

This is devastating.

It would have been devastating enough if this was the first disaster to befall us in recent times. But unfortunately, in the four years that I have been your President, this is the fourth time I have had to declare a State of Disaster. As you will recall, following the disasters of 2022 and 2023, I ordered the distribution of food assistance to food insecure households, as well as the intensification of irrigation farming under the Greenbelt Initiative and the Mega Farm Programme. The irrigation strategy alone has been targeting 54,720 hectares that require 46.97 billion kwacha to cover seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural infrastructure, and solar pumps. But before these measures have had a chance

to take hold and yield fruit, we find ourselves here, hit by another disaster.

What I saw recently in Nkhotakota and Karonga districts is simply heart breaking. The floods that were triggered by heavy rains have resulted in loss of lives and injuries, damage to homes, household property and public infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water points and schools, just to name but a few. Of the 17,033 households affected in these two districts, over 70 percent were displaced and forced into camps where they require constant support in terms of food, non-food items, restoration of service delivery, and rehabilitation of public infrastructure.

But like I said, in all 23 districts where I am declaring a State of Disaster today, the most urgent need is food because of the large number of people at risk of hunger. Accordingly, I am calling on all Malawians of good will, both here at home and abroad, all our development partners, the international community, all relevant United Nations Agencies, the World Bank, non-governmental organizations, the local private

sector, Members of Parliament, and all those who have any resources in cash or kind to spare, to avail those resources as donations to the Presidential Initiative to Stop Hunger, which will be coordinated by my office through the Department of Disaster Management Affairs. Our initial estimate is that close to 600,000 metric tonnes of maize valued at 357.6 billion Kwacha will be required for this humanitarian response programme. Donations in cash or in kind should be sent to the Commissioner for Disaster Management Affairs, P/Bag 336, Lilongwe 3.

Fellow Malawians, there is no one in this country who is at fault for any of the disasters that keep coming against us. But if we stand united and put away the politics of pettiness and negativity to confront this latest disaster, there is no one in this country who should die because of hunger. So let us once again show the world the greatness we are capable of as a people when we stand together as one nation.

God bless you and thank you for listening.