

MR. PRESIDENT

EXCELLENCIES

I am happy to have this opportunity to address the Sixty-Second Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

I convey my congratulations to Your Excellency on your election as President of the Sixty-Second Session of the General Assembly.

The Malawi Government would like to assure you of our support in your duties of President of the United Nations.

I also take this opportunity to thank our host, President George W. Bush, the Government and people of the United States of America, for the hospitality accorded to me and my delegation since our arrival in this State of New York.

I commend your predecessor, Her Excellency, Madame Sheikha Al Khalifa, for the sterling leadership, direction and guidance she gave in steering the Sixty-First Session of the General Assembly.

OUR SHARED VISION

I wish to focus my address on Malawi's efforts to meet the objective of the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**.

Malawi believes the MDGs are the tools for enhancing growth and development and for improving the livelihood of the people in the poor countries of the world.

I am pleased to state that my country is making steady progress in the implementation of the MDGs. We have adopted the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), as a home-grown overarching national policy for

creating new wealth, for achieving sustainable economic growth and development and for combating endemic poverty that still engulfs many of our people.

The people of Malawi share a common vision to eliminate poverty in the shortest period by transforming the country from a predominantly importing and consuming to a predominantly manufacturing and exporting economy.

This, we believe, will enable our country to position itself within the global economy and to compete favourably in the world markets.

To achieve this vision, we are implementing a sound system of economic governance in both the public and private sectors. These include fighting corruption; reforms of the public and private sectors; safeguarding human rights and the rule of law; increasing social protection for vulnerable groups, and developing infrastructure for development.

We have also placed at the top of our development paradigm, research, science and technology including information and communications technology, gender empowerment and environment protection.

PRIORITIES WITHIN PRIORITIES

Based on the limitation of our financial and human resources, we have identified six “**priorities within priorities**” that we believe can pull Malawi out of the “poverty trap”.

These include Agricultural Development and Food Security; Irrigation and Water Development; Transport and Communication Infrastructure Development; Energy and Power; Integrated Rural Development and Management and Prevention of HIV and AIDS.

I am pleased to report that the Malawi Government began to implement these priorities in 2004 and by 2006 my country had achieved a phenomenal growth rate of 8.5 %.

We therefore believe that the selection of these top priorities is a good one. We are also implementing an effective system of income distribution targeting the rural poor.

I can therefore boldly say that the Malawi Government is confident that most MDG targets will be met or even surpassed by the year 2015.

THE MALAWI GREEN REVOLUTION

I now wish to briefly review some of the Millennium Development Goals. For instance, we are certain to decrease by half the proportion of the population that suffers from extreme poverty and hunger and to improve their nutritional status by the year 2015.

Malawi has also made significant progress in the past three years in reducing poverty. In 1998, for instance, people living below the poverty line

were 53.9% of the total population. This number had been reduced to 45% in 2006.

For the past two years, Malawi has achieved a high rate of agricultural production and food security. Presently, Malawi has food surplus amounting to 1.4 million metric tons over and above our national food requirement. We are now able to export food to other countries in Southern Africa.

Malawi has one of the highest budgetary allocations to agriculture and food security. We are empowering smallholder farmers to access essential farm inputs mainly seeds and fertilizer through a subsidy program.

We also support the development of viable small, medium and large scale irrigation schemes to reduce dependence on rain fed agriculture.

MATERNAL AND CHILD MORTALITY

The other aspect of the MDGs that Malawi considers critical is the reduction in Maternal and Child Mortality. Here again my country has achieved remarkable progress, largely through the adoption of the ‘Essential Health Package’ as the main strategy for the delivery of a cost effective package of health services through a donor-funded Sector-Wide Approach Program (SWAP).

We are also addressing the challenge to reduce under-five mortality rate by two-thirds by the year 2015, and to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by three quarters.

We have identified several highly preventable and treatable diseases such as malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea, and malnutrition.

I am happy to say that Malawi is on track in attaining the MDG. We have reduced the rate of child deaths per 1000 from 189 live births in 2000 to 133 in 2006.

FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA

In the fight against malaria, Malawi has so far distributed about 5 million insecticide treated mosquito nets (ITNs) to households. The percentage of pregnant women and children under five years sleeping under treated nets increased from 8% in 2000 to 20% in 2006.

In 2007 we plan to give out 3 million more with support from the Global Fund and President George Bush's Malaria Initiative in this area.

One of Malawi's biggest challenges is the management and prevention of Tuberculosis, whose prevalence rate is very high especially with regard to patients having HIV and AIDS. The Malawi Government has therefore declared TB an emergency and launched a five-year plan for addressing the problem.

MANAGEMENT OF HIV AND AIDS

I am pleased to state that Malawi is one of the few African countries that are successful in meeting

the challenge from HIV and AIDS pandemic. Malawi has also been successful in its public awareness campaign about the HIV and AIDS epidemic and its consequences.

In 2004 Malawi had 14 Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) centres and now these have increased to 250. Over 5 million people have now been tested within a period of less than 3 years.

With the support from Bill Clinton Foundation Malawi has now over 130,000 people receiving free ARVs.

Additionally, in the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV and AIDS, we are now reaching over 60% of pregnant women in Malawi.

I am also happy to say that the Malawi national HIV and AIDS and the Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) programs are among the fastest growing in the world and the pandemic is showing signs of a decline.

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I wish to reiterate my statement to this Assembly in 2006 that we should regard HIV and AIDS not only as a medical crisis but also as having economic, socio-cultural and political dimensions.

That being the case, the solution to the crisis must be comprehensive and holistic.

I therefore established a Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS in my office as a technical arm in implementing the MDGs.

I am also pleased to report that from 2004 to date, Malawi has developed a National Nutrition Policy and accompanying documents as a guide for action. As a result 350,000 orphans are now getting nutrition support. This has reduced the negative impact of malnutrition, HIV and AIDS such as absenteeism and many of those affected now return to work quickly and are reintegrated into the economy.

ACCESS TO POTABLE WATER

The Government of Malawi recognizes that water is life. We have therefore placed high priority on the development of our water resources.

We are rehabilitating water supply schemes and are constructing many earth dams countrywide to allow rural communities access clean water. Presumably, about 66% of the population are now accessing safe and clean water.

Malawi is therefore confident that the MDG on access to water for all would be achieved before 2015.

UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

In the area of Universal Primary Education, the MGD has set the target for universal primary education by boys and girls. Malawi has a very high budget allocation for education, science and technology in order to meet the MDGs.

To date, Malawi has 60% of the children enrolled in primary schools. We are also creating a conducive teaching and learning environment in order to reduce absenteeism, poor performance and drop-out rates.

MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

Malawi is in concordance with the MDG on the management of natural resources and environmental sustainability. We have reviewed our natural resources policies, legislation and programs to curb misuse and abuse of the natural resources and to prevent environmental degradation.

My Government is involving rural communities in the management of existing resources such as forestry and also in annual national tree planting for reforestation and prevention of soil erosion and desertification.

Furthermore, the Government is implementing Management programs for Carbon Sequestration and Other Ecosystem Services to encourage extensive tree growing.

GENDER EQUALITY

In the area of gender equality the MDG set to promote gender equality and empowerment of women by integrating targeted programs for women to enable them become part of the economic growth.

In Malawi, there is a high adult illiteracy level of 48% for women as compared to 24% for men, high girl dropout rates from formal schooling system, high vulnerability to HIV and AIDS infection. We are addressing these problems.

My Government is also empowering women in the political, economic and social areas. In the past three years, there have been more women in Ministerial and other management positions than ever before.

For example, women in Malawi now hold key positions of Attorney General, Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of Malawi; five full Cabinet Ministers; one Deputy Minister; Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission, Clerk of Parliament, several Ambassadors, Principal Secretaries and Chairpersons of Statutory Corporations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Mr. President, I would like to conclude by stating that Malawi has successfully positioned herself to attain the MDGs and we are optimistic that many of the objectives will be attained.

In fact, I can say with confidence that Malawi is indeed becoming a success story.

We therefore appeal to the United Nations to recognize Malawi's heroic efforts and assist us to maintain the development momentum.

I would also like to appeal to our development partners to support Malawi's policy to get from poverty to prosperity. We need, *inter alia* support in accessing new technologies especially for information and communication, capacity building and infrastructure development.

THANK YOU.