



REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

STATEMENT

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY PROF. ARTHUR PETER MUTHARIKA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

AT THE

**GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 72ND SESSION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

MALAWI'S COMMITMENT IN

**"FOCUSING ON PEOPLE: STRIVING FOR PEACE AND A DECENT
LIFE FOR ALL ON A SUSTAINABLE PLANET"**

**NEW YORK
20 SEPTEMBER 2017**

Your Excellency, Mr. Miroslav Lajcak, President of the General Assembly;

- Your Excellency, Mr. Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations;
- Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government;
- Distinguished Delegates;
- Ladies and Gentlemen

The cause that rallies us together is that we are one humanity, on one planet. This is the tie that binds us all. And all our differences and national interests are secondary to this overriding cause.

The United Nations was founded to safeguard the human race, its human rights, and its potential. We are here to protect people, their existence and their rights. We are here to ensure that the potential of every people, everywhere, fully blossoms into flowers of hope. It is our sacred duty, as a generation, to take actions that offer hope to next generations.

It is therefore befitting, that this year, we meet to think about *focusing on people*. For Africa, we should be focusing on investing in the people if the full potential of African people is to be realised.

Unfortunately, there are many outside the African continent who choose to focus on its socio-political weaknesses instead of focusing on the huge potential of African people. As one analyst has said:

Africa is often seen as a vast continent of incomprehensible tribalism, endemic corruption, and almost intrinsic misery and violence.

This is the view history has painted in the mind of the world. And this one-sided perception of Africa must end. This negative view blinds the world from seeing the potential of African people. We can only realise the potential of any people when we see them positively.

Mr President,

The eradication of poverty and the pursuit of prosperity across the world should be based on raising the potential of the people we seek to support. Development cannot be taken to any people and succeed unless it is driven from within. No human community can take off socio-economically without empowering its people to drive their own development agenda. That is why I underline the importance of investing in the human capital.

However, it is also a foregone conclusion that any efforts to invest in the people and raise their potential need our collaboration as a global family. Hence, our appeal for concerted action by all member states of the UN and indeed many other global non-state actors.

Mr. President,

The adoption of Agenda 2030 by the UN reflects our global resolve to address the most pressing challenges in the spirit of sustainable human collaboration. Our unity among nations is imperative because we achieve more when we unite and collaborate.

The well-being of the global society is more assured when we work in partnerships for development. At the same time, we achieve more within our nations with inclusion of all sectors of society.

Statistics provided by the World Bank and the UN show that there is correlation between inclusion and empowerment of women on one hand and economic growth and development on the other.

Mr President,

The inclusion and empowerment of women begin with a focus on the girl child. We need to do away with early marriages. Indeed, I am pleased to note a global drop of marriages from 36% to 26% over a period of two years since 2015.

Malawi is proud to be part of this achievement. Among other initiatives, my Government has passed a law against marriage below the age of 18. By law, Malawi

provides an opportunity for girls to grow, mature and make informed choices about their education and future life. Girls are protected by law in this regard.

I am, therefore, proud to reiterate my Government's commitment in promoting gender equality, women and girls' empowerment in order to reduce the vulnerabilities of women and adolescent girls to violence and all forms of abuse.

Mr. President

In focusing on people, one more critical category is the Youth. Youth empowerment is a means to achieving inclusion. According to the 2015 African Economic Outlook, Africa has the fastest growing and most youthful population in the world. In giving the Youth the focus they deserve, the African Union agreed to make 2017 the Year of the Youth. This is the year we focus on investing in the Youth.

Malawi is honoured to be part of the mission for Youth empowerment. We have taken decisive measures that include providing technical and entrepreneurial education to the youth who have not had the opportunity to attend university. At the same time, we are also increasing access to tertiary education.

One more category that needs inclusion is that of persons with disability. Malawi is reviewing its policies and strategies in education, health and trade in order to foster effective inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Further, Malawi has made strides in efforts to eradicate vicious and irrational attacks against persons with Albinism. There was a time when these attacks became rampant in some parts of the country. I am glad to report that there have not been any new attacks in the past six months.

Mr. President,

Malawi is committed to inclusive development. We however recognise that the majority of our citizens continue to depend on agriculture for their livelihood. But agriculture is a challenging sector given the current climate variability affecting many parts of the world. That being the case, Malawi is implementing social protection programmes in order to cushion the vulnerable segments of our population. Our measures include cash

transfer programmes, food for work, school feeding programmes and a farm income subsidy programme.

Let me take this opportunity to express our gratitude to cooperating partners, including the various UN bodies for their continued technical and other related support towards the success of these programmes.

Mr. President,

As we think of focusing on people, it is important to pay close attention at the issues that affect most vulnerable citizens. Climate change is one factor on top of the list. For an economy that depends on agriculture in a country like Malawi where 85% of the people are in agrarian communities, crop failure is always a tragedy. For two consecutive years, Malawi has suffered alternating heavy rains, floods and drought that led to crop failure and hunger.

The suffering caused by climate change everywhere is real. The people who suffer in the tragedies are not just in figures and statistics. These are real human souls like anyone here.

We all need to feel the urgent need to collectively undertake sustainable management of our natural resources. We must remember that if this planet perishes, we all perish with it! This is a matter that demands our collective responsibility.

Therefore, let me appeal to all member states to consider strategies and avenues of collaboration for us to adapt to the fast-changing climate.

Apart from climate change, our world is also collectively facing the threat of terrorism. Terrorism and conflict hinder progress and make the world live in a state of fear. Anything that causes mankind to live in a state of fear is an evil to be fought. Malawi stands in solidarity with the victims of terrorism across the world. We reaffirm our commitment to stand against all forms of terrorism.

We stand in solidarity with victims of human trafficking and forced migration wherever they are.

Mr. President

Let me now move to the question of peace. Peace is a prerequisite for development. As a country, we believe in peace as a necessary condition for human existence. For this reason, Malawi has been active in peace building operations of the United Nations and African Union.

Today, Malawi reaffirms its pledge to continue as an envoy of peace. We believe this is our duty to humanity. We believe that in protecting your neighbours, you protect yourself.

While we all seek peace as a necessary condition for existence, we face the threat of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are an existential threat to humanity. The threat of nuclear weapons is a concern to us all. Ironically, even those nations who keep nuclear weapons get concerned with this threat. The idea of keeping nuclear weapons questions the wisdom of mankind.

Let me express, categorically, my Government's disapproval of the spread of ballistic missile technology. This should not be tolerated in any way by any member states of the United Nations.

There is no country that is too small to contribute to the peace agenda of the world. There is no continent that is too poor to be part of the global peace agenda.

Malawi strongly supports the African position for the full representation of the continent on the Security Council. The United Nations can no longer claim to lead in democracy while side-lining a representation of 1.2 billion people from Africa. How can we claim to be in unity with those whom we exclude? Africa must be included!

Our rising Africa is always ready to play her role in the global community. And Malawi will continue to be a global player.

Thank you for your attention!