



STATEMENT BY

**HER EXCELLENCY MRS. JOYCE BANDA
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

**AT THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 67TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**NEW YORK
26TH SEPTEMBER, 2012**

(Please check against delivery)

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, Excellencies Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you, on your well-deserved election to the Presidency of the Sixty-Seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly. My delegation and I would like to assure you of Malawi's full support during your tenure of office.

It is an honour today to address this assembly for the first time in my capacity as President of the Republic of Malawi. As the assembly may be aware, I took office in April of this year after the death of my predecessor, His Excellency Professor Bingu wa Mutharika. On behalf of all Malawians, I appreciate the support that the world gave us during the difficult time in our country. I would like to also particularly acknowledge the support that I received from leaders from Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the entire African continent when I ascended into the Presidency. The support that I received is a mark that Africa has indeed embraced women's leadership.

Joining the world's leaders here and becoming only the second female head of state in Africa's history after Her Excellency President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia is a moment of pride for me. But mine is not the story of success of an individual, but of a people. A peaceful and constitutional transition of power was not inevitable when my Presidency began. It is the courage and determination of the people of Malawi that made this possible. The people of Malawi have made a decisive choice: they have chosen democracy, they have chosen peace and they have chosen to work together to realize their destiny. It is my people's courage and determination that has taken me into the Presidency, and which we will now apply to our national development.

Mr. President, the theme of the General Debate this year is *"Bringing about adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations by peaceful means"*. This theme allows us to reflect on some of the conflict situations around the world, including in Africa. These conflicts have a devastating effect on the lives of millions, especially women and children. The impact of these conflicts goes beyond the people directly involved as they affect the region and the world.

Let me agree with the UN Secretary General, Excellency Ban Ki-moon when he said in his re-election speech that one of the greatest opportunities we have for a better world without conflict is through sustainable development. The biggest threats to security and peace are poverty, lack of opportunity and lack of hope. It is unacceptable to me as the President of Malawi, as it should be to the global community, that we have children continuing to suffer from malnutrition. Or that they yearn to learn, but have to sit under trees rather than proper classrooms. It is unacceptable that a mother should die while giving birth because the nearest health center is far away. Or that thousands die of diseases that we have answers for. It is unacceptable that the youth who represent the future of our world have few opportunities to realize their potential. Or that they are not guaranteed a society where they can speak their minds. It is unacceptable that farmers and other workers continue to toil to make the best of what they have but do not get the fruits of their labour due to the lack of modernization, a supportive policy environment and access to markets; and that they are buried under global tariffs and taxes. It is when these frustrations are in place that conflict takes root.

For decades, I have fought these issues in Malawi as a social justice and human rights activist and through my work at the grassroots. I have experienced the struggles of the poor and the suffering of a Malawian woman. I have championed the advancement of the oppressed and marginalized, fought for the rights of women and children, campaigned for the betterment of the rural and urban poor. Mr. President, I can attest to the fact that the experience of a poor and disadvantaged Malawian is intimately intertwined with that of Africans and indeed with that of the least developed countries.

Now, as the President of the Republic of Malawi, I have a vision. My vision is to eradicate poverty through economic growth and wealth creation. Malawi aims to create wealth by transforming the structure of the economy, promoting the private sector in order to achieve economic growth, accelerate job creation and protect the vulnerable and the excluded within a decentralized and democratic environment. My vision, specifically, is to transform Malawi to become one of the fastest growing African economies in the next decade. For me, growth is not merely GDP growth. Growth is about wealth and prosperity for all, opportunity for all, happiness for all, political and economic freedom for all. Growth is also about growing the number of children in school, and young people in jobs. Growth is about increasing the number of mothers who give safe birth in a hospital, and of growing the number of families who have plenty of food.

As this assembly may be aware, for the past three years Malawi faced severe economic and social challenges brought on by poor political and economic governance, and this could have impacted on our ability to accelerate the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Therefore upon assuming office, I immediately put in place an economic recovery programme to restore macroeconomic stability in the country, so that we address our immediate macroeconomic issues but also secure Malawi's ability to meet the MDG targets. **Mr. President**, I would like to share that we are certain we will be able to achieve five of the eight MDGs by 2015. But we will continue to strive to achieve our goals for the remaining three MDGs - universal primary education, promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women and improving maternal health. Coincidentally, these three MDGs are on issues that I have worked on throughout my life and I will personally ensure that Malawi redoubles her efforts to make improvements in these areas.

Mr. President, my government realizes that the potential of Malawi is great: the potential of our land, our resources and most importantly of our people. But this opportunity will only be seized through our own efforts. This is why my vision is not just hopeful words. Our willingness to take tough decisions does not end here. Our plans need to be translated into action. To this end, within my first 100 days, Malawi held an inclusive National Dialogue on the Economy to narrow down five priority sectors within our medium term national development framework, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS II). The five priorities are: Energy, Tourism, Agriculture, Mining and Infrastructure Development.

Mr. President, central to these priorities is our emphasis on delivery through partnership with the private sector. We will facilitate this by making changes that improve the business climate. My Cabinet has identified three specific projects within each priority sector and translated this into an implementation plan for the next two years. These projects range from completion of essential roads and rail lines, to setting up alternative energy sources, undertaking business climate reform to attract investment into agro-processing and mining. These will set our country on a path of fulfilling its full potential. In addition, I have also launched two Initiatives; the Presidential Initiative on Maternal Health and Safe Motherhood; and the Presidential Initiative on Poverty and Hunger Reduction to fast-track the interventions needed to address the social needs of the disadvantaged groups especially women and youth.

Mr. President, Malawi refuses to accept what others may consider to be our destiny: state of underdevelopment. Malawi is committed to change this perception. But in doing this, my government and indeed the People of Malawi know that we need to engage the rest of the global community. That is why within days of taking office, I re-opened dialogue and engagement with our neighbors, with African leaders and indeed with the rest of the world. The People of Malawi are grateful for the goodwill that many have shown us and we are encouraged by the support of our partners.

Malawi will continue to need global support in the short and medium term. We need this support to protect the rural poor from food shortages caused by prolonged dry spells in some parts of the country. Malawi is looking for partnerships to build its energy capacity. Malawi needs support to attract private investment for the rich potential we have in agro-processing and mining, among others.

We are looking for partnerships to support the development of our transport and communications infrastructure in order to improve the market access to markets.

Mr. President before I conclude I wish to draw your attention to the following three issues that have a bearing on most least developed countries.

Firstly, I call upon the General Assembly of the United Nations to ensure that the Istanbul Declaration and the Programme of Action which was adopted in Turkey in May, 2011 be implemented in its entirety and in an effective and timely manner. In particular, duty free, quota free market access and supply side capacity must be ensured to the least developed countries.

Secondly, most least developed countries are facing the adverse effects of climate change, which is causing flooding, land degradation as well as drought. In this regard, Malawi welcomes the recent outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development held in Brazil where international consensus emerged and agreement was reached on important areas of sustainable development. Implementation of these agreements is very crucial for our future.

Finally, on the issue of the reform of the United Nations, Malawi fully supports the expansion of the Security Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories. As you are aware, Mr. President, Africa makes the single largest region within the United Nations, and a very significant proportion of issues discussed in the Security Council concern the African continent. It is for these reasons, therefore, that Malawi joins the rest of African nations in demanding at least two seats in the permanent category and five seats in the non-permanent category as stipulated in the Ezulwini Consensus. Africa has to lead its own development, and this will be a step in ensuring it can.

At this moment, **Mr. President**, I say to this esteemed assembly that Malawi is on a journey. A journey to change its trajectory. A journey to make real change happen. A journey to foster private sector growth. A journey to be an integral part of the global community. **Mr. President**, Malawi is ready to take its turn to grow. To grow not just the wealth, but the opportunities, hopes and freedoms for all the Malawian people. As a new President and a new member of this global community of leaders, I ask for your support as this one African country journeys to realize its full potential – for its people, for Africa and for the world.

I thank you for your attention.

