



STATEMENT BY
HER EXCELLENCY DR JOYCE BANDA
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

AT

THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 68TH SESSION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK

TUESDAY 24TH, SEPTEMBER, 2013

- **Your Excellency, Ambassador Mr. John William Ashe, the President of the General Assembly;**
- **Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government;**
- **Your Excellency Mr. Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations;**
- **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the 68th Session of the General Assembly. Let me assure you of my full support and cooperation and that of my Government during your tenure of office. Your credentials and experience as a career diplomat here at the United Nations assure us of a successful 68th session. It is indeed an honour for me to have the opportunity to address this Assembly again.

Mr. President:

In my maiden address last year, I spoke of the challenges that Malawi faced at the time that I assumed the office of the President of the Republic.

I outlined my Government's commitment to address political and economic governance problems that I inherited. I sought to achieve macroeconomic stability, restore the rule of law, and the observance of human rights.

The reforms my Government has undertaken have been painful but necessary. I am therefore pleased to report to this Assembly, that Malawi is registering a strong economic recovery. For instance, foreign exchange and fuel are available, the currency has stabilised, inflation is declining, and industrial production is up from 30 percent in 2012 to 75 percent in 2013.

Economic growth is forecast at 5 percent this year up from 1.8 percent last year. Furthermore, Malawians are once again enjoying their freedoms and civil liberties as enshrined in the Constitution.

Mr. President, I am pleased to say that Malawi, the “**warm heart of Africa**” is warm again and my Government is committed to staying the course with these reforms. In moving forward, my agenda is to build on the foundations we have laid in order to realize sustainable and inclusive growth.

Mr. President:

Today, we are gathered here to reflect on the progress made on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and debate on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Before I provide my reflections, I would like to commend the UN Secretary-General for his efforts to ensure an inclusive global debate on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. As I understand, more than 750,000 people across 194 countries provided their views, indicating their readiness for bold change. I am pleased that Malawi was one of the countries selected for the national consultations.

Mr. President:

I believe that in Malawi and beyond, the MDGs have played an important role in concentrating our efforts around the common purpose of eradicating poverty. They have raised public awareness about unacceptable levels of poverty, and helped to mobilise action towards a fairer world.

At the same time, the MDGs have provided a common framework for monitoring progress, highlighting areas of achievement, as well as challenges. Yes, they have transformed the way both developing and developed countries approach development cooperation.

Mr President,

Malawi is on track to achieve four of the eight MDGs - reducing child mortality; combating HIV and AIDS, Malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development.

However, we are unlikely to meet the goals for eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal access to education; ensuring gender equality and empowerment of women; reducing child mortality and improving maternal health.

As the end of the MDGs draws closer, Malawi is stepping up its efforts to accelerate the attainment of the MDGs. We have identified best practices, as well as the bottlenecks to our progress. In particular, we have understood that gender inequality and lack of empowerment of women are the common constraints limiting our progress towards the MDGs. In response, my Government has developed a new MDGs Acceleration Framework that places significance on removing these barriers, once and for all.

Mr. President:

In building the foundations for the Post-2015 architecture, I want to reflect on the lessons from Malawi's experience in the implementation of the MDGs.

Firstly, I believe that the strength of the MDGs lies in the fact that they are focused and targeted. This helped us to narrow our focus and concentrate our efforts on the most critical

issues, whilst allowing local ownership. In the case of Malawi, the MDGs were localized through the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy.

Secondly, the past 13 years have taught us about the importance of the linkages between these goals. A poor family is not just economically deprived. It is also likely to face a host of other challenges such as environmental vulnerability, abuse of human rights, and lack of or limited access to essential services. Lifting people out of poverty therefore requires a holistic approach.

Thirdly, strong political will and transformational partnerships have accelerated the attainment of most of the MDGs targets.

Finally I wish to make a cautionary note that we need to be aware, that different continents were at different levels of development at the time that we created the MDGs. This created pressure, sometimes leading to unintended consequences. In the case of Malawi, in our efforts to achieve universal access to education, quality of education was compromised. And yet, access and quality should not be separated.

Mr. President:

We all recognize that the task of developing and achieving consensus on the Post-2015 Development Agenda may not be an easy one.

However, we know a lot more today about what works and what doesn't, than we did 13 years ago. We know that to achieve real and lasting change, we must be committed. We know that to inspire and motivate action, we must be bold and ambitious. We know that to maximize our resources and talents, we need smart partnerships.

Mr. President

The Report of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons provides a strong foundation for a new framework. I applaud, in particular, the overall vision of ending extreme poverty by 2030. I also commend the focus on, among other things, empowering girls and women, creating jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth and ensuring good governance and effective institutions.

I am aware that many people have argued that the best strategy to achieve Millennium Development Goals is to realize GDP growth. However, I am of the view that this idea is premised on a top down approach. In my view, it is income into poor households that must

come first. The issues that affect population growth, malnutrition, girls' access to education, maternal health are all rooted in poverty and particularly lack of income at the household level. If we have to overcome these challenges we need to promote policies and programmes that bring decent incomes into households.

In this regard, my government has sought new partnerships with private sector, local communities, and development partners, to deliver development in more innovative ways.

My Government is focusing on transforming rural economies and breaking the vicious cycle of underdevelopment and poverty. My Government has decided to invest in improving the livelihoods of poor people in the rural and urban areas.

This Transformation Initiative is aimed at modernizing our rural communities by bringing a standard package of interventions in health, education, water, sanitation and housing.

The Government has also rolled out the Malawi Rural Electrification Program that aims at spurring industry, trade and agricultural productivity through the provision of electricity. The Government is also implementing Community Saving and Investment Programme to promote a saving culture and building of assets to enhance income and wealth creation.

I see this leading to the majority of the poor being active participants of our economy.

Mr. President:

If we cannot uplift the people that are in our rural areas, as is the case for many developing countries, to earn decent income in the household, the vicious cycle of population growth, malnutrition, maternal risks and poverty will remain with us. If the Post 2015 Development Agenda is to realise its dream, we need to go to the grassroots where the poor are.

For this reason, I welcome the idea that under the Post 2015 agenda, we should track progress against our goals by looking at them across all levels of income.

This will drive us to equality of opportunities for people across all income groups and help us realize our dream of shared prosperity. This is key to restoring the dignity of all our people.

Mr. President

Finally, let me emphasise the need to attain global peace and security. We are all aware that conflict, instability and civil unrests disrupt our development efforts. As we look forward to the Post-2015 Agenda, we should recommit to global peace and security. As a mother, I felt compelled to make this appeal.

Mr. President:

Malawi will continue to fully engage in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. I am hopeful that the voice of the poor, of women, of people with disabilities, and of the marginalized, will be included in the agenda.

Mr President I am optimistic about a world of shared prosperity.

I thank you for your attention.