

Speech by His Excellency Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi delivered to the Scottish Parliament on Thursday, 3rd November 2005

- **Your Royal Highness, The Princes Royal**
- **The Right Honourable Jack McConnell, First Minister Of Scotland**
- **The Right Honourable George Reid, Chairman And Presiding Officer Of The Scottish Parliament**
- **The Right Honourable Hilary Ben MP, Secretary Of State For International Development**
- **The Lady Provost Of Edinburgh**
- **The Lady Provost Of Glasgow**
- **Honourable Members Of Parliament**
- **Professor Thandika Mkandawire, Director, United Nations Research Institute For Social Development**
- **Distinguished Guests**
- **Ladies And Gentlemen.**

I wish to thank you, Right Honourable First Minister, the Scottish Executive and the people of Scotland for inviting me to attend this very important conference on Scotland-Malawi Partnership. Today we are making history in the relationship between Malawi and Scotland.

I and my delegation want to express our heartfelt appreciation and profound gratitude for the warm reception that you have given us since our arrival in Edinburgh.

My special thanks go to Your Royal Highness, Princess Royal for gracing this occasion. May I humbly request Your Royal Highness to carry our message of deep gratitude to Her Majesty the Queen for the support that the United Kingdom has been giving to my country. Britain has always been our greatest supporter and the people of Malawi are truly grateful. This support has strengthened the bonds of friendship between Britain and Malawi.

I also take this opportunity to commend the Right Honourable Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, for his initiative in establishing the Commission for Africa and for his personal commitment in ensuring that its aims and objectives are achieved. This commitment has also been demonstrated through the G8 Summit that gave prominence to problems affecting Africa and the search for solutions to these problems.

Your Royal Highness
Mr. Chairman

It is against this background of such cordial relations that the Scotland-Malawi Partnership has been established. The Co-operation Agreement that we have signed opens up yet another new chapter in our relations.

I am confident that the historic ties that have existed for a long time between Scotland and Malawi will facilitate the implementation of resolutions of both the Africa Commission and the G8 Gleneagles Summit.

This, to me, is an indication that Scotland has fully recognised that Malawi can only come out of poverty and, therefore, achieve the Millennium Development Goals, if there is a deliberate commitment on the part of the developed countries to help my country.

Your Royal Highness
Mr. Chairman

I am also pleased to note that this conference will sensitise the people of Scotland to support Malawi in its efforts to consolidate democracy as a means to ensure economic prosperity.

PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT

Your Royal Highness
Mr. Chairman

Malawi is facing many critical challenges. These include extreme poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, other readily preventable diseases, high and unsustainable domestic and external debt burdens, low education levels, growing unemployment and low investment in agriculture, food production and manufacturing.

My Government is fully committed to address these problems through promoting good governance, human rights, the rule of law and justice with equity. I am happy to say that within a short period of time, my Government has managed to put the economy back on track by strengthening fiscal discipline and sound public expenditure management. We now have a Malawi programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This has, in turn, resulted in the resumption of donor aid to the country.

The economy is, however, still experiencing some problems due to external factors, especially the poor weather that has affected agricultural production and food security. Malawi's extreme dependence on rain-fed agriculture is responsible for the food insecurity, thereby inhibiting economic development.

Your Royal Highness
Mr. Chairman

We in Malawi have realized that in order to deal with these problems, we need to implement a sound policy in public sector management. This is the sine qua non for economic growth and development. In that regard, since I assumed the leadership of my

country, my vision has been to kick-start macroeconomic growth, leading the country out of poverty to prosperity.

To realize this vision, my Government is implementing macroeconomic policy reforms in the public and private sectors. These include, inter alia, adoption of sound fiscal policies, control of public expenditure, effective system of accountability, monitoring evaluation and transparency. We have also intensified our stance on “zero tolerance” to corruption.

Your Royal Highness
Mr. Chairman

In order to create the necessary framework for sustainable growth and development, and bearing in mind limitation of resources, my Government has decided to focus on a few sectors we believe can pull our economy out of the poverty trap. These are: (i) agriculture and Food Security; (ii) Infrastructure (iii) energy; (iv) tourism; (v) mining; and (vi) manufacturing .

PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

Your Royal Highness
Mr. Chairman

I also believe that the private sector has a big role to play in manufacturing and trade. Hence, my Government is creating a conducive environment for private sector development through Public-Private sector dialogue and partnership. For instance, my Government is encouraging private sector participation in the development of infrastructure in multilateral trade systems and in meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

We have also recognized that the private sector can play an important role in the ongoing World Trade Organisation negotiations under the Doha Development Agenda. For instance, we need the private sector to produce high quality goods that can effectively compete in the world markets. This will determine how much the business community in Malawi will benefit from the global trading system.

HUMAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT

Your Royal Highness
Mr. Chairman

I will now turn to the subject of investing in people. I believe that a good grounding in education eventually determines an individual’s success in career and business later in life. This is why my Government continues to provide free primary education to enable many children to be educated. We have also embarked on construction of girls’ hostels

in secondary schools, to encourage girls to complete their education so as to promote development of the nation.

In order to link science and technology with development, I have decided to establish a University of Science and Technology in Malawi. Its mission will be to enhance the application of science and technology as a pre-requisite to the country's industrial development and manufacturing. There is a wide consensus also that tertiary education and vocational training are equally important to provide a wider employment base, especially to self-employment.

Furthermore, the school curriculum is being redesigned to shift the emphasis from training students for white-collar jobs to training for business entrepreneurship. The teaching of business studies alongside vocational training, will enable many boys and girls to become business oriented and self-employed and hence, reduce unemployment.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND HIV/AIDS

Your Royal Highness
Mr. Chairman

Let me now turn to public health as a precondition for macroeconomic growth. I believe that one of the overarching and most critical challenges facing Malawi is to provide primary health care. The existing facilities cannot cope with demands. Hospitals are few, congested and far apart, forcing sick people to travel long distances to find medical support.

The shortage of trained doctors and nurses is also another serious challenge Malawi is facing. This is affecting each and every aspect of the health care delivery system. The problem is further compounded by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The human resources crisis in the health sector is among the worst in Southern Africa. Other constraints facing the health sector include inadequate physical infrastructure and weak management systems.

In order to address these problems, my Government has, with the support of a number of donors, adopted the Sector Wide Approach (SWAP) for the management of the health sector. We have put in place a six-year programme of work that addresses five main areas in the health sector. These areas include: (1) Training and human resources development; (2) Support of basic drugs and other medical requirements; (3) Medical equipment; (4) Provision of basic infrastructure in hospitals and clinics such as water, electricity and communication; and (5) Strengthening hospital management at central and district levels.

Your Royal Highness
Mr. Chairman

With regard to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Malawi has a serious and growing problem. We are losing people each day. However, I must say that my country is one of the success

stories in managing the pandemic. The entire media has been mobilised to focus on this pandemic. As a result, more and more people are becoming fully aware of the dangers of HIV/AIDS. The people in Malawi have welcomed the provision of voluntary testing and counselling as well as free anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs.

It is also important for me to say that since the free treatment programme started early this year, over 30 anti-retroviral clinics have been established throughout the country. As a Government, we are pleased about this success. Our plan is to rapidly expand this programme so that we adopt a holistic approach to take into account the medical, economic, political and social dimensions of the HIV/AIDS on the country's development process.

FIGHTING AGAINST CORRUPTION

Your Royal Highness
Mr. Chairman

Before concluding my statement this morning, I want to talk about corruption in my country. The origin of corruption in Malawi is the system of "laissez-faire" that allowed powerful and corrupt political leaders to amass huge wealth and fortunes at the expense of the poor masses. During the previous Governments, corruption and bad governance had become entrenched and had permeated the entire system from top to bottom. So powerful were these politicians that they influenced decisions in all the three branches of Government.

That is why upon my inauguration as Head of State and Government of the Republic of Malawi, I immediately instituted a "zero tolerance" policy on corruption in order to return to the people of Malawi what legitimately belonged to them. This, however, has been interpreted by those who benefited from corruption as political persecution. I am now being accused of being ungrateful to the powers that be because my Government is asking for accountability. I am asked to let sleeping dogs lie.

But Your Royal Highness, the people of Malawi are concerned that corruption benefits only a few individuals by making them enormously rich and powerful while robbing the poor who become poorer. There is overwhelming consensus in Malawi that corruption is evil and an enemy of humanity, and that it must be stamped out from our society.

In response to this, my Government is determined to fight corruption and to ensure transparency and accountability as an integral part of Malawi's political and economic governance. I see no other way for Malawi to get out of poverty. Therefore, my Government will continue to intensify its fight against corruption, theft and misuse of public funds.

I therefore want the people of Scotland to know that it is for this reason that the opposition cooked up impeachment charges against me as a way of removing me from power. Their grand idea was to re-install the corrupt Government to continue plundering

our economy. I am pleased to inform this conference that most people in Malawi are against the impeachment.

CLOSING REMARKS

Your Royal Highness
Mr. Chairman
The First Minister
Invited Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

In conclusion, I wish to congratulate the organisers of this conference for creating this unique opportunity to discuss economic and social crisis now facing Malawi. We are indeed building upon the past. I hope that these issues will be fully discussed during the Conference and that through the co-operation agreement between Scotland and Malawi, a new path will emerge wherein collaboration and co-operation between the two countries will be strengthened.

Let me, once again, thank Your Royal Highness for sparing your time to be with us. My delegation cherishes this moment.

I also wish to thank you, Mr. Chairman, the First Minister and all the people of this beautiful Scotland for inviting me to participate in this important conference. I look forward to its positive outcome.

God Bless Malawi
God Bless Scotland