



PRESS BRIEFING

ON RETURN OF

HIS EXCELLENCY PROF. ARTHUR PETER MUTHARIKA,

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

FROM THE SIXTY NINTH (69TH) SESSION

OF

THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGA),

NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation,
LILONGWE 3

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1. INTRODUCTION

His Excellency President Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika, has returned from a highly successful visit to New York, the United States of America (USA), where he participated in the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

The Session was held under the theme, **“Delivering on and Implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda”**. World leaders strategized on how to tackle the challenges Member States have encountered in the implementation of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They committed to ensure that adequate means for implementing the Post-2015 agenda, in terms of finances, technology development and transfer, and capacity building, are mobilized.

This Press Statement aims at giving a summary of activities that His Excellency the President carried out in New York, which included attending the General Assembly, and other official engagements on the sidelines, aimed at improving Malawi’s cooperation with its partners and the global community. It also highlights Her Excellency Gertrude Mutharika, First Lady’s engagements, in New York, during the same period.

2. GENERAL DEBATE OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Debate ran from 24th to 30th September, 2014. Heads of State and Government delivered national statements on a wide range of issues from peace and security; national poverty eradication initiatives; development strategies; emerging global challenges, including climate change; status of achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Post-2015 Development Agenda.

His Excellency Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika addressed the GA on 25th September, 2014, where he informed his counterparts that Malawi had recently held the first-ever Tripartite Elections that ushered into power his

administration. He shared his Government's initiatives of uplifting people from poverty, including the Housing Subsidy Programme and the Farm Input Subsidy Programme, and the Community Colleges, that aim at providing skills training, thereby creating job opportunities, especially among the youth.

Commenting on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, His Excellency President Mutharika urged the cooperating partners, to make aid disbursements more predictable and timely. He encouraged the global community to devise monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, to ensure greater accountability and transparency in the way these resources are utilized. He further urged the world Leaders to make the Agenda more inclusive, by focusing on the less privileged like women, the elderly and people living with disabilities.

HIGH LEVEL MEETINGS

His Excellency the President participated in the 2014 United Nations Climate Summit, as part of High Level meetings of the 69th General Assembly. This was complemented by another side event meeting on the "Feeding the 9 billion: Leveraging Healthy Sustainable Diets for Climate Change Mitigation, Environmental Protection and Public Health Benefits", which the delegation of Malawi participated in. The Climate Summit brought together over 100 Heads of State and Government, plus 800, leaders of business, finance and civil society representatives, to discuss issues of climate change.

In preparation for the universal climate change agreement in Paris, France, next year, political will was generated among the leaders to cut gas emissions tremendously, and increase resilience to climate change, thereby propelling the world towards a cleaner and greener economy. Issues of carbon pricing were also supported.

Leaders expressed strong support for the Green Climate Fund, with many contributing towards the Fund's initial capitalization of \$10 billion, and committing to the US\$100 billion, annually by 2020. The European Union (EU), also renewed commitment to financing mitigation measures for developing countries.

With the world population expected to grow to 9 billion by 2050, and demand for food to increase tremendously, the world leaders committed to transform agricultural practices, by increasing productivity, while reducing carbon emissions. In this vein, several governments and organizations announced their intention to join the newly launched Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture. His Excellency Prof. Mutharika shared and outlined Malawi's policies on climate change, bordering on mitigation and adaptation.

3. BILATERAL MEETINGS ON THE SIDELINES OF UNGA 69

His Excellency the President held a number of bilateral meetings aimed at improving cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Malawi, and a number of development partners.

3.1 Meeting with H.E. Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary General

On 18th September, President Prof Arthur Peter Mutharika met Mr Ban Ki-Moon, UN Secretary General. The Secretary General congratulated His Excellency Prof Arthur Peter Mutharika, for emerging victorious in the 20 May, 2014 Tripartite Elections in Malawi. He applauded his leadership for presiding over a smooth transition process, and continuing to lead Malawi, on the path of peace, since he came to power.

He commended Malawi, for the success in the four (4) MDGs, and encouraged Government to find ways and means of dealing with the remaining Goals, through the Post-2015 Development Agenda process. Mr Ban Ki-Moon applauded the President and Government of the Republic of Malawi, for its commitment and active participation in the safe-guarding

and maintenance of peace and security across the globe. He singled out the participation of the Malawi Defence Forces' in the Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). President Mutharika was challenged to provide leadership to the SADC, AU and the UN, in global development, peace and security.

3.2 Audience With President Uhuru Kenyatta

President Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika met in audience with President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, on 25th September, 2014. The discussions centered on the need to enhance the two countries historical relations and cooperation, which date to the days of Presidents Dr. Kamuzu Banda and Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. In this vein, the Heads of State directed the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, to conclude preparations for the Joint Permanent Commission (JPCC) scheduled for October, 2014, in Nairobi, Kenya.

Malawi sought Kenya's assistance in the Public Service Reforms, the Haduma Initiative, and cooperation in military affairs. President Mutharika also raised the possibility of Malawi importing natural fertilisers from Kenya.

The Heads of State agreed on the necessity of increasing the volumes of African economies enhancing trade amongst themselves, through Regional Economic Communities (RECs). President Kenyatta encouraged the Government of the Republic of Malawi to vigorously pursue Public Finance Management systems, especially on the issues of taxation, so as to improve revenue collection and hence eventually reduce direct budget support. Kenya continues the same path.

President Prof. Mutharika invited President Kenyatta to visit Malawi soon, which President Kenyatta accepted.

3.3 Meeting with Rt. Honourable Gordon Brown, UN Special Envoy on Global Education and Development Partners

On 23rd September, His Excellency the President held discussions with Rt. Honourable Gordon Brown, UN Special Envoy on Global Education and Development Partners. The meeting brought together development partners to discuss the education climate in Malawi, and possible interventions.

From the meeting, the development partners, that included the World Bank, UNESCO, USAID, JICA, Global Partners for Education, UNICEF, DFID, Brookings Institute, made specific commitments to Malawi, aimed at strengthening the education sector and retaining children at school. The commitments included redirecting resources to primary and secondary education; training of teachers; financial support; vocational training; support to the community colleges project; science and technology advancement early childhood development; promoting girl-child education; increasing access to education for the marginalized; infrastructure development including school blocks, hostels, teachers' training institutions and teachers' houses; social cash transfer programme; just to mention a few.

Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown, underscored the need for Government of Malawi to discuss further with the Development Partners in education, for the latter to refocus and realign their interventions with the national priorities and the Post-2015 development agenda. The Development Partners will be travelling to Lilongwe in January, 2015 for this purpose.

3.4 Mr. Andris Piebalgs, EU Commissioner for Development

His Excellency also met Mr. Andris Piebalgs, EU Commissioner for Development. The President briefed the Commissioner the state of affairs in Malawi, with respect to the withdrawal of budget support by the Common Approach Budget Support (CABS), group because of the cashgate scandal. He reiterated that the result of this is the 40% shortfall in the

budget. Commissioner Piebalgs expressed sympathy to the Malawi cause, and pledged to discuss ways of ensuring that the support is unblocked.

3.5 Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, US Assistant Secretary of State –African Affairs

Ms. Greenfield called on His Excellency the President, and discussed the Ebola epidemic; following up on investments commitment from the US-Africa Summit; and Malawi's continued participation in peace keeping operations on the continent.

His Excellency President Mutharika requested Ambassador Greenfield to assist in lobbying for a bigger quota for Malawi tobacco on the US market. He reiterated Malawi's position as regards issues of peace and security across the continent, especially in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where Malawi has deployed a battalion, alongside South Africa and Tanzania.

3.6 Dr. Mark Dybul, Executive Director of Global Fund

His Excellency and the Executive Director of Global Fund on HIV and AIDS, TB and Malaria programmes in Malawi discussed the Fund's operations in the country, and agreed the following:

- a) That the Fund will continue financing Malawi. He also informed that Malawi's application in the New Funding model will be considered favourably;
- b) On its part, Malawi will have to sort out general management issues as soon as possible, so that the reforms and subsequent agreements become smooth;
- c) The Global Fund will provide technical support to assist on the financial and programming challenges, if necessary. Also that

Malawi and the Global Fund will agree on the repayment plan that Malawi is comfortable with.

3.6 Mr. George Soros, Founder and Chairman of Open Society

As a follow-up to the meeting held in Washington DC last August, His Excellency the President held a meeting with Mr. George Soros, Chairman of Open Society, on 26th September. It will be recalled that a Team from Open Society visited Malawi, soon after the US-Africa Summit, to explore potential areas of collaboration with the Government of Malawi.

Open Society has provided financial assistance to Government of Malawi, for possible consultancies in governance extractive industries, civil service reform, and education sectors. Experts from the Natural Resource Governance Initiative (NRGI) will be discussing with Government officials, on how to build capacity in formulating mining contract negotiations.

3.7 Mr. George Freeman, Chairman and CEO of Universal Leaf Tobacco Company

The Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Universal Leaf Corporation called on the President, to brief him about their operations in Malawi. He reported that Burley tobacco from Malawi is liked by cigarette manufacturers.

The CEO called upon Government to consider supporting the Integrated Production System (IPS), as one sure way to improve the quality of tobacco, as well as prices to farmers. IPS system engages producers long before the growing season, supply them with all inputs and buy the crop from growers at guaranteed prices which are better than prices dominating the auction floors.

Universal Leaf Corporation requested Government to lobby with the US Government for the extension of the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) beyond 2015, and that the renewed AGOA should include agricultural products with tobacco as one of them.

His Excellency the President assured Universal Leaf Corporation that Government will do everything possible to ensure a cordial relationship with companies in the tobacco industry. He, however, bemoaned poor prices that have characterized the tobacco market and wondered whether farmers were managing to recover their inputs as well as making some profit. He directed the Minister of Industry and Trade to call for a meeting with Ministry of Agriculture, and other key stakeholders, to understand more on the proposed IPS approach, as well as chart the way forward.

3.8 Malawi Business Luncheon

Corporate Council for Africa organized a business luncheon in honour of His Excellency the President. It was attended by about forty (40) US companies with interest in energy, agriculture, ICT and many more. The Board of Corporate Council for Africa, which has a membership of 180 companies, expressed keen interest to work with Malawi.

In his key note address, His Excellency the President informed the gathering that his Government is committed to attracting foreign investment, and is working hard to make the investment environment most conducive. He outlined the many legislative and administrative reforms being carried out to ensure that private sector thrives in Malawi. He invited them to consider seriously investing in Government's priority sectors and projects including the Greenbelt, Nsanje World Inland port, Energy sector, Tourism, Mining among others.

The Corporate Council for Africa promised to organize a trade delegation to Malawi next year.

3.9 Meeting with Malawians in the Tri-State Area (Diaspora)

Whilst in New York, His Excellency the President and Mrs Gertrude Mutharika met Malawians living in the Tri-State Area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut and encouraged patriotism, and unity, among Malawians in the Diaspora. He shared with them Government's policies aimed at improving the welfare of the citizenry, including, the Cement/corrugated sheets subsidy programme; the Community College initiative; and the continuation of Farm Input subsidy programme. He urged Malawians in the Diaspora to contribute towards the socio-development of Malawi.

4 ENGAGEMENTS OF HER EXCELLENCY MADAM GERTRUDE MUTHARIKA, FIRST LADY

Her Excellency the First Lady had her own programme in New York, where among others, she participated in First Ladies' meetings to do with Martenal Health; Adolscent issues; the Girl-child and women empowerment; and Health issues including autism.

4.1 First Ladies' meeting on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Beyond 2014: Education matters – Empowering young people to make healthier choices

Her Excellency the First Lady co-hosted this Side Event meeting, alongside Germany, and First Lady of Tanzania. Building on the Eastern and Southern Africa's Initiative that was adopted in December, 2013, the meeting reinforced Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) as a key area of action for the ICPD beyond 2014 agenda. This way, young people

will be educated and equipped with information about their bodies, sexual health, sexual behavior, reproductive health rights, so as to make informed and healthier choices. Towards this Initiative, the Government of Germany announced assistance of three (3) million Euros.

First Lady Mutharika gave concluding remarks, highlighting the importance of involving the youth themselves fully, in discussing issues of early pregnancies and marriages, abortions, and HIV infections. She further shared Government's intervention programmes that aim at empowering young people economically and socially, including the establishment of Community colleges and skills centers; youth parliament; youth-friendly reproductive health centres; and targeted social cash transfers, among others.

4.2 Martenal and new-born Health beyond 2014, with a focus on Adolescent girls

Her Excellency the First Lady participated in a Side Event on Martenal and new-born Health beyond 2014, with a focus on adolescent girls. The meeting was hosted by the Organization of African First Ladies (OAFLLA) in conjunction with UNFPA, and it was held to find solutions to the alarming levels of unsafe abortions, HIV stigma, early marriages, and gender-based violence.

The First Ladies recommitted to put the girl child at the centre stage of the development agenda. They suggested ways of enhancing the potential for Africa's adolescent girls to acquire education, skills for decent employment, and develop leadership potential. They also committed to continue advocating for the empowerment of women and adolescent girls to exercise their reproductive rights, and ensure access to sexual and reproductive health information. They called for a harmonization years of national legislation to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18.

They also agreed to mobilize global political leadership and increased investments, to improve maternal, new-born and adolescents' health.

4.3 Seventh (7th) Annual World Focus on Autism

Her Excellency the First Lady attended the 7th annual World Focus on Autism, where participants shared experiences and best practices on people with autism.

The Forum brought together different Foundations and personalities across the Globe, working with people with autism, whether in research, in rehabilitation and speech therapy, and in their social and cognitive development. There was general agreement that autism is now a priority health issue requiring huge investments, and that resources need to be made available to those less privileged who cannot afford rehabilitation costs. In Africa and other developing countries, there is need for more awareness campaign; diagnosis and rehabilitation institutions; trained medical staff, teachers and care givers to work with these people; suitable facilities, education and training for autistic people to make them independent individuals.

Autism Speaks Foundation and other similar foundations pledged assistance to less privileged who cannot afford rehabilitation and speech therapy for their loved ones. Earlier, Dr. Andy Shih of Autism Speaks Foundation, met Her Excellency the First Lady to understand what Malawi is doing on autism, and what challenges we face in this area, and indeed what assistance we need as a country in this matter.

World Health Organization is willing to work with Malawi to build capacity on autism at community level.

4.4 Meeting with Ms. Aubryn Sidle, Executive Director of AGE Africa

Her Excellency the First Lady the Executive Director of AGE Africa, who are working in Malawi advancing girls education in a number of districts. It was learnt that AGE Africa provides scholarships to 150 girls in the country, and that the number will double this academic year. The First Lady thanked AGE Africa for this good job, and urged them to consider reaching out to girls in all the districts in the country.

5 CONCLUSION

The trip to New York, United States of America, was undoubtedly a success. Not only did it afford His Excellency the President an opportunity to address the UN General Assembly, but it was an opportunity for him to hold bilateral meetings with Malawi's cooperating partners, soliciting support for several programmes and initiatives, aimed at improving the socio-economic situation of Malawi.

Her Excellency the First Lady also advanced Malawi Government's drive for women empowerment, sexual reproductive health, maternal and child health.