



Republic of Malawi

**THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS: A COLLECTIVE
CHALLENGE TO UNITED NATIONS**

STATEMENT BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR. BINGU WA MUTHARIKA
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

TO THE

**SIXTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**NEW YORK
24TH SEPTEMBER 2008**

(Check Against Delivery)

Mr. President
Secretary General
Excellencies

I take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as President of the 63rd Session of the General Assembly.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate your predecessor, Dr. Sergjan Kerim for the wise leadership provided to the General Assembly during the past one year.

I wish to start by stressing that the global food crisis is a collective challenge to the United Nations. Throughout the world, more people are unable to find enough food. There are increased cases of food riots. These in turn lead to political instability.

The food crisis has resulted from failure of all nations to increase and sustain the production of staple food crops such as wheat, rice, maize, millet, potatoes, lentils, fish, meat and poultry.

As leaders in the United Nations, we were aware of the signs leading towards global food shortage, widespread famines and malnutrition. But we decided to ignore them.

We the world leaders failed to acknowledge that the food crisis poses a new threat to the stability of the social framework and to economic prosperity of all nations, especially the small nations.

Mr. President

I submit to this august Assembly that the global food crisis is beginning to erode, and even negate the gains in national and global economic growth and trade that were manifested in many developed and developing countries. If these negative trends are not addressed effectively, there will be growing conflicts within some nations and among nations as the scramble for food to feed the people intensifies.

Several factors have contributed to the global food crisis, but I will mention only a few.

Firstly, during the past two decades, food production in many countries has been affected by persistent severe climate changes, such as cyclones, hurricanes, typhoons, floods, droughts, rising sea levels, desertification. Yet these climate changes do reduce productivity in agriculture and food security.

The high dependence on rain-fed agriculture, especially in developing Sub-Saharan countries, has also placed such nations at the mercy of the vagaries of nature.

It is a matter of great concern that global responses to these problems have been in the form of world conferences, seminars and workshops on climate change. But not much has come out by way of concrete global action.

Secondly, agriculture and food production have been given low priority by international development institutions in their allocation of resources and investment funds. This has been compounded by low national budgetary allocation to food production in many countries especially in Africa.

Recent diversion of food crops towards the production of bio-fuels has also reduced the stock of food and created food insecurity in some countries. This is further aggravated by the preference by commercial farmers to grow cash crops rather than food crops, thereby creating deficits in food production.

Thirdly, there is general concern in Africa that multilateral and bilateral institutions continue to oppose subsidies to agriculture and food production especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, South East Asia and Latin America. This has been so, despite overwhelming evidence that smallholder farmers continue to find enormous difficulties to access agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, improved seeds, insecticides and herbicides. These institutions also know that farmers are unable to produce enough food to feed themselves without subsidies.

A matter of global concern is that food production in many developing countries has been adversely affected by environmental destruction and degradation of agricultural lands caused by serious pollution through deliberate dumping of toxic waste and hazardous materials in rivers, lakes, seas and other water sources, largely by industries from the North. This has deprived many farmers of land to produce more food.

This dumping has spoiled coastal lands, destroyed tourism and has brought about misery to the inhabitants who can neither depend on agriculture nor fish in their waters in order to earn a living.

Mr. President

The problems enumerated above pose a serious challenge to the global food security. World leaders in the United Nations can no longer detach themselves from these serious issues. We should be part of the solution.

Firstly, the Malawi Government sees the attainment of global food security as a collective challenge. This must be premised on the ability to produce sufficient food and to move such food from surplus areas anywhere on the globe to food deficit areas.

In order to alleviate the global food crisis, Malawi proposes that a compact should be reached that countries that can produce sufficient food surpluses should be empowered to share with others in the world wherever they may be, through a fair international trading system. This would ensure that the entire humanity has enough food.

Secondly, Malawi proposes that the United Nations should urge industrialized countries to make significant increases in resource allocation into agriculture especially food production. Special attention should be given to improve infrastructure, machinery and equipment and capacity building for farmers, especially smallholder farmers.

The private sector in industrialized countries should be persuaded to increase investment in food production, paying special attention to the application of science and technology to agriculture, research on climate changes and on the measures to protect food producing nations from the vagaries of the climate.

Thirdly, Malawi believes that the global food crisis could be mitigated if the United Nations, the World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral donor agencies would seriously consider granting subsidies for agriculture and food production as an integral part of their global development policy and aid packages to developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.

It would also be useful if the international community could acknowledge Africa's potential and the capacity to contribute significantly to the solution to the global food shortage. To that end, the United Nations should fully support the "**Alliance for an African Green Revolution**" chaired by the former Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan.

More specifically, Malawi appeals to the G8 countries to support us to create a "green belt" around our lakes and along our rivers to irrigate land up to twenty kilometres from the shores. The Malawi Government plans to grow a lot of rice, wheat, maize, millet, cassava, potatoes, beans and lentils for the local and international markets.

Mr. President
Secretary General
Excellencies

I wish to conclude by stating that Malawi is convinced that in order to achieve global food security, the United Nations must persuade the rich industrialized countries to share research, science and technology in food production and processing with the poor countries. Furthermore, the industrialized countries should consider funding food research programmes and to subsidize agriculture in developing countries as part of the attainment of global food security.

The global food crisis is not beyond the capacity of the community of nations to resolve. The global policy towards a hunger-free world must be taken here in the United Nations General Assembly.

All nations, big or small, rich or poor, must work together to eliminate the global food shortages, famines, hunger and malnutrition.

Together we can do it.

I thank you.