



REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

SPECIAL REMARKS TO BE DELIVERED

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR. LAZARUS McCarthy CHAKWERA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI AND
CHAIRPERSON OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED
COUNTRIES (LDCs)**

**DURING A VIRTUAL HIGH-LEVEL OPENING SESSION
OF THE AFRICA REGIONAL REVIEW MEETING (ARRM)
OF THE LDCs.**

22ND FEBRUARY, 2021

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Lilongwe**

- **Your Honour Dr. Saulos Klaus Chilima, Vice President of the Republic of Malawi and Minister Responsible for Economic Planning and Development and Public Sector Reforms;**
- **Your Excellency Mevlut Cavasoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey;**
- **Your Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar;**
- **Honourable Karina Gould, Minister of Development Cooperation of Canada;**
- **Honourable Ministers from the African Region and Haiti;**
- **Your Excellency Volkan Bozkir, President of the United Nations General Assembly;**
- **Madame Fekitamoeloa Katoa Utoikamanu – Under Secretary General, and High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries; and Small Island Developing States and Secretary General of the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs;**

➤ **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

I am very delighted to welcome you to this much anticipated meeting. I would have loved to host you all here in Lilongwe, but this meeting has been overshadowed by the COVID-19 Pandemic since 2020, so we have to make do with meeting virtually. Greater than the pandemic's disruption to the social and economic fabric of our nations has been its devastation on all of us through the loss of friends, family, and compatriots, and so let me take this opportunity to express my deepest condolences to all of you.

Although this pandemic began as a health crisis, its adverse impacts have spilled over to other key sectors. The LDC members' GDP shrank by 1.3 per cent in 2020, thereby increasing the number of poor households and worsening inequality between and within countries, with disproportionate effects on women. The Pandemic has exposed our limitations in the fields of science, technology and innovations, which has laid bare the digital and technological divide between nations.

Realizing the gravity of the situation, the Group of LDCs issued a Statement on COVID-19, calling for a global stimulus package for LDCs, which includes among others, Official Development Assistance support, debt relief, aid for trade and access to technologies.

Our immediate concern is equitable and universal access to the COVID vaccines and the necessity of declaring it as a global public good as this is the only way to curtail the massive spread of the Pandemic. **The International Chamber of Commerce recently published a paper that clearly shows that the economic consequences for all countries will be much higher if poor countries are left out of vaccination efforts. Any prolonged disruption of global travel and trade will be catastrophic.**

We need to do these things in order to ensure that the current conditions do not derail our efforts to achieve the goals we share, particularly Agenda 2063, which articulates the vision of the Africa we want. We need to maintain our resolve to achieve the kind of structural transformation and productive capacity that will integrate African LDC's into the

global world, especially through the implementation of the recently launched African Continental Free Trade Agreement.

Based on our experience so far, it is crucial to appraise the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. Despite attaining mixed progress, the Programme's principles remain valid, namely the principles of ownership and leadership which place primary responsibility for our development on us, the LDCs. To live up to these principles, emphasis must be placed on upholding the rule of law, promoting peace and justice, and ensuring the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders, especially our youth. As we seek global support in these pandemic times, these are the principles around which we ought to build a genuine partnership and solidarity among ourselves.

We should be optimistic and identify people-centered solutions to the current global economic crisis and build resilience for the ones to come. Collectively we need to lay the groundwork for a sustainable, resilient and gender responsive future to build back green, better and stronger. This meeting will discuss and adopt a progressive document

which will form the basis of the new Program of Action for the LDC's to be adopted at the Fifth UN Conference on LDCs, to be held in Doha, in 2022.

Let me just highlight a few areas of focus:

First, systemic resilience and crisis preparedness. On our part as LDCs, we must work hard and smart, in collaboration with our development partners, to address the climate crisis. It is clear that we need new approaches that build systemic resilience to future shocks in all LDCs. Therefore, we need a comprehensive multi-hazard crises mitigation and resilience building mechanism for LDCs.

Second, domestic resource mobilization. We need to identify measures to expand fiscal space and foster domestic resource mobilization, including preventing illicit financial flows, base erosion and profit shifting. While the development of Debt Service Standstill Initiative (DSSI) of the G20 was timely and is certainly welcome, its scope and coverage is limited. We, therefore, need a mechanism for real debt workout, especially for those African LDCs that are in

or close to debt distress. At the same time, we should prioritize efficient utilization of all available sources of finance and strengthen our capacity to access it.

Third, Science, Technology and Innovation (STI). We should harness Science, Technology and Innovation in order to realize major breakthroughs in retrofitting our economies. This should be complemented by: access to modern technologies, including new and renewable technologies; resilient infrastructure that withstands disasters; and improved technological and managerial skills, especially among young women.

Fourth, resilient food and nutrition systems. Currently, the rise in malnutrition and undernourishment are undermining our potential for growth and prosperity. We need to transform agri-food systems to ensure that no one is constrained to access healthy diets, but also that food systems are sustainable.

Last but not least, partnership and cooperation. We urge the international community to demonstrate solidarity and provide stronger international support to avert the various crises affecting LDCs and build long-term resilience. I call on our partners to understand that as has been the case with addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, tackling the acute development challenges faced by LDC must be done multilaterally. That means we need a common and collaborative response that is ambitious and that will be our measure of success for the Fifth UN Conference in Doha.

As we march towards that goal, I wish you all fruitful and constructive discussions.

Thank you for your attention