



MALAWI

STATEMENT BY

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

AT THE SPECIAL MEETING ON THE GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
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(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

Mr. President,

Let me begin by thanking you for convening this special meeting of the Economic and Social Council on the global food crisis. I would also like to thank you for recognizing of the demonstrated commitments of the President of the Republic of Malawi to addressing the challenges of improving the lives of the poor and the hungry in Malawi.

My delegation would like to be aligned with the statement by Her Excellency the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations on behalf of the Least Developed Countries.

Mr. President,

Recent statistics on the global food situation indicates that an estimated 850 million people in the world today suffer from hunger and that 820 million of these live in the developing countries. The ongoing efforts to fight hunger, including the implementation of the commitments contained in the 1996 Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action are of critical importance, but have so far been insufficient to effectively reduce the number of the hungry globally. This has been exacerbated by a number of factors, including recurrent bad weather and environmental degradation, lack of or low investments in the agricultural sector and rapidly increasing energy prices.

Our strong conviction in Malawi is that solutions to the current food crisis exist and are within the grasp of the international community. However, collective and urgent action is required by all members of the international community to overcome the challenges that have triggered the current global food crisis.

While the role of the international community cannot be overemphasized, we also believe that the primary responsibility in the fight against hunger rests with national governments.

Mr. President,

In this regard, we in Malawi, have learnt that success in improving food security is contingent upon good governance and political leadership, and improved economic conditions in general and agricultural growth in particular. Furthermore, we believe that national governments, particularly in developing countries must be ready and willing to take bold decisions and execute innovative ideas aimed at achieving food security. It is largely on this basis that the Malawi Government, against all odds, has for the past three growing seasons been subsidizing the cost of basic agricultural inputs such as hybrid seeds and fertilizers to boost the production of the staple crop, maize. This has resulted in a surplus of food over and above our national requirements in each of those three seasons.

In support of the subsidy programme, the Malawi Government is scaling up extension services in order to transfer knowledge and skills to smallholder farmers for optimal utilization of the given inputs through a number of new and innovative interventions. These include the establishment of village based information centres where farmers can access information on markets and agricultural production techniques and an extensive farmer training programme designed to train selected farmers into village based extension workers within their communities on a voluntary basis.

Mr. President

In addition to rain-fed agriculture, the government is investing in irrigation and water development as a long term strategy to ensure sustained food security. All these initiatives are part of the integrated rural development programme which is aimed at accelerating development and reducing poverty. Its implementation involves all stakeholders, and gender has been mainstreamed to ensure the full participation of women who constitute about 70 % of Malawi's smallholder farmers.

Mr. President,

While Malawi is doing everything possible to achieve and sustain food security, external factors continue to threaten the progress made. These include erratic weather conditions caused by climate change, rising energy and transport costs and constraints in international trade. In this regard, we support the measures towards a concrete action plan highlighted in the issues note for this meeting. In particular, we agree that the food crisis should be considered a focus at the 63rd General Assembly.

Furthermore, we call upon the international community to assist developing countries, particularly the Least Developed Countries, including Malawi to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. We also call for the elimination of agricultural subsidies and tariffs in the Doha Round in order to stimulate economic growth in developing countries. Then, and only then, can the international community together put poverty in the oblivion of history.

I thank you.