



Republic of Malawi

REMARKS TO BE DELIVERED

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. LAZARUS McCARTHY CHAKWERA,

PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI,

**ON BEHALF OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES
(LDCs) AND IN A NATIONAL CAPACITY,**

AT THE TRANSFORMING EDUCATION SUMMIT

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Lilongwe 3

- **Excellencies**
- **Ladies and gentlemen**
- **Dear Colleagues,**

It is an honour to address this meeting on education, the cornerstone upon which we can build our future. If properly harnessed, education can help our societies to leverage their most important resource, the youth and children. Failing to provide quality education, skills and values to our children will adversely affect the socio-economic development of our countries.

I, therefore, wish to quote Nelson Mandela, who understood the transformational nature that education has for our societies:

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

The Least Developed Countries have made substantial progress in reducing the education gap by increasing enrolment, particularly at the primary level. This shows that dedicated attention and commitment can bring tangible results, including to the most vulnerable. However, equity and quality challenges remain.

The COVID-19 pandemic, reminded us that access to equitable education is not only a matter of quantity but also of quality. Millions of children in the Least Developed Countries missed access to education at a critical moment in their lives due to lack of access to the internet, electricity, or the limited capacity of the education system to adapt to a new reality.

To avert such scenarios, we need better infrastructure, for quality education and better programmes that empower our teachers and provide them with the high-quality instruction that is necessary for the education of the 21st century.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Online platforms were the most widely used means to deliver education when schools closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, with 83% of countries using this method. However, online learning reached only a quarter of the school children worldwide. Most LDCs were left behind due to lack of access to internet, electricity, digital tools and relevant digital skills.

Properly designed digital education can help to revolutionize education and expand opportunities for all in LDCs.

I, therefore, take this opportunity to warmly welcome the proposal to establish an Online University for the Least

Developed Countries to expand access and promote continuity of learning.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The recently adopted Doha Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries is the fundamental instrument that the international community has, to foster sustainable development and realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the one billion people living in the most vulnerable countries. It recognizes the profound positive impact that education has, especially on young people, women, and girls, people with disabilities and other vulnerable populations.

Moreover, schools remain one of the safest places for children, and disruption of schooling by COVID-19, climate change related disasters, and violence, exposed them further resulting in high drop outs and learning loss. Therefore, the need for resilient school infrastructure and education systems has become much greater.

I call upon partners to support the Least Developed Countries in their commitments to transform education without which no meaningful global human capital development will be realised.

Let me now turn to my country, Malawi, and our commitments to transform education.

As part of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, Malawi reconfigured the school calendar to enable learners to catch up on days lost due to the pandemic. Schools are also offering remedial lessons and we have intensified back-to-school campaigns for school drop-outs. We are also set to establish a national 'Education Radio' station. Malawi has digitalized secondary school curriculum for increased access to education. Many of our Higher Education institutions are developing their online education capabilities.

We are developing an overarching costed Blended Education Strategy for Transformation, which will integrate the following commitments under the individual Thematic Action Tracks:

- **Track 1: On inclusive, equitable, safe and health-promoting schools, Malawi commits to increasing primary completion rate from 51% to 100% with a transition to secondary from 38% to 100% in a safe learning environment by 2030.** To achieve this,

education will be mandatory from early childhood to secondary level with an integrated minimum priority package of school health, nutrition, sanitation and safety.

- **Track 2: On learning and skills for life, work and sustainable development, Malawi commits to strengthening the essential foundational skills of literacy, numeracy, socio-emotional learning, and digital literacy.** Malawi will review and resource its curriculum to make it more relevant. My government will strengthen foundation skills, technical and vocational education and integrate climate change. Malawi also commits to construct and adequately equip more secondary schools and teachers houses.
- **Track 3: On Teachers, Teaching and the Teaching Profession, Malawi commits to transforming the teaching profession to make it prestigious, trusted, accountable and to strengthen innovative and progressive practices.** Malawi will strive to improve the quality of teacher training to diploma or degree level of all primary school teachers. Malawi will recruit adequate teachers and improve their welfare.

- **Track 4: On digital transformation and education, Malawi commits to scaling up best practice teaching and learning innovations and technologies**, with expanded access to digital learning opportunities, including for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics. Educational institutions will be enabled with energy, connectivity and digital skills training.
- **Track 5: On financing education, my Government affirms its support for the new Global Compact on Education Financing. This includes increasing tax-to-GDP ratio by 5 percentage points to 21.4 percent through progressive** tax reforms by 2030 and to sustain allocation of at least 15 to 20 percent of national expenditure, and at least 4 to 6 percent of GDP, for domestic financing of education. My government commits to hold itself and development partners more accountable for resources allocated for expanding and transforming education.

I conclude by joining the call for international partners to:
(i) elevate education financing and consider education financing as an investment; (ii) remove conditionalities on financing often imposed by international agencies,

including public sector wage bill capping; and (iii) take action on debt restructuring.

I thank you all.