

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE EMPLOYERS CONSULTATIVE ASSOCIATION OF MALAWI (ECAM)

1. SALUTATION

- ❖ Our Guest of Honour, Your Excellency Madam Joyce Banda
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2. Talking points

- ❖ Your Excellency, it is with great pleasure that I stand before you to represent all Employers and the Business Community in Malawi to make a speech today.
- ❖ This is indeed a big day for employers and all the social partners for this particular event to be graced by none other than Her Excellency herself. It just shows that this regime takes labour matters seriously. And my fellow employers will agree with me that this is the first time we are seeing this!

- ❖ Before I touch on today's business, allow me to thank you, your Excellency for bringing back the much needed confidence within the business community. For the first time in years we, as businesses, are now able to comfortably plan within the short term and medium term without fearing some economic surprises!
- ❖ This has been manifested in our assessment of the First 100 days of your rule, your Excellency, where everybody within the business community agrees that it has been an excellent start due to you may pro-business policies.
- ❖ We also join the voice of Tony Blair last week, who applauded your leadership and Government's efforts to resuscitate the once sick economy through critical economic reforms.
- ❖ As a result, we as businesses are slowly beginning to recover and return to become the viable enterprises we were 12 months ago.

- ❖ Which brings me to the theme of this conference: “ End Child Labour, our children, our future...”
- ❖ Indeed as employers we need to preserve and protect our children as these are the ones who will form the recruitment pool for businesses in future. We therefore, your Excellency, cannot afford to lose them to child labour.

- ❖ As businesses, we entirely agree with other stakeholders that fight for making the whole Economy a Child Labour Free Zone.

- ❖ As for ECAM, I wish to declare in your presence, your Excellency, that we are already a Child Labour Free Zone. All our members respect local Labour Laws as well as International Conventions 138 and 182 and comply religiously.

- ❖ From our own investigations as employers we believe the fight against Child Labour should focus in the following areas: Domestic labour, Small and Medium enterprises that mostly use

family labour and above all the supply chain. This is where the problem is.

- ❖ Though ECAM is a Child Labour Free Zone, our members have stepped up their programmes in the areas of corporate social responsibilities such as building and supporting educational institutions, supporting hospitals and clinics, assisting orphans with educational grants, vocational employment and so many other activities relating to the total elimination of child labour.
- ❖ For example, the Tea and Tobacco Sectors through the Tea Association of Malawi and Tobacco Association of Malawi (TAMA) respectively, Illovo Suar, Alliance One and many more members of ECAM, are currently funding and coordinating various anti-child Labour activities in the communities where they are operating from.

- ❖ Your Excellency you may also wish to know that at the ECAM Secretariat, we also have coordinated several anti-child labour projects, with support from the International Labour Organization (ILO) where we focused on awareness programmes amongst fellow employers as well as dealing with the problem of child labour in the supply chain.

- ❖ Currently we are in the process of negotiating with the ILO IPEC-Geneva to assist with funding to enable us coordinate another long-term anti-child labour programme within the membership especially in relation to Small and Medium Enterprises.

- ❖ Why are we involved in the elimination of child labour as employers?

- ❖ The consequences for businesses associated with the use of child labour in their supply chains include reputational damage, loss of

business, shareholder disappointment or even divestment. We can't afford to have this in Malawi.

- ❖ Employing children can have direct negative impact on business since, amongst other problems, children who work instead of going to school may have fewer opportunities to become skilled adult workers hence ultimately affecting the employment pool.

- ❖ We , as modern employers, respect the fact that a child, during child hood, has a right to education and that every effort must be made to ensure that this is respected.

- ❖ Finally, let me take the opportunity to thank the Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing (ECLT) Foundation based in Geneva, Switzerland for funding this huge conference.

- ❖ I thank you your attention.