



**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF LABOUR
HONOURABLE EUNICE MAKANGALA, MP
DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
NATIONAL CHILD LABOUR CONFERENCE IN
AGRICULTURE IN MALAWI AT CRESTA
CROSSROADS HOTEL IN LILONGWE ON 4TH
SEPTEMBER 2012 AT 15:00 HOURS**

- Your Excellency Madam Joyce Banda, the President of the Republic of Malawi
- Your Excellency Chief Justice Richard Banda retired
- The Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Honourable Professor Peter Mwanza MP,
- The Minister of Education Science and Technology, Honourable Eunice Kazembe MP
- The Minister of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Development, Honourable Anita Kalinde MP
- Ministry of Industry and Trade, Honourable John Bande MP
- All Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers here present
- The President of Malawi Congress of Trade Unions Mr. Luther Mambala

- The Secretary General of Malawi Congress of Trade Unions Mr. Robert Mkwezalamba
- The President of Employers Consultative Association of Malawi Mr. Buxton Kayuni
- The Acting Executive Director of Employers Consultative Association of Malawi Mr. Beyani Munthali
- The USDOL Representative
- The President of the ECLT Foundation and the International Tobacco Growers Association Mr. Antonio Abrunhosa
- The ILO Director
- The Dean of Diplomatic Corps Mrs. Thandiwe Dumbutshena
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Members of the International Delegation present
- All Government officials present

- All Paramount Chiefs, Seniors Chiefs and all Chiefs present
- Members of the Clergy and all Religious leaders here present
- Members of the NGOs and Civil Society
- Distinguished participants
- Members of the Press
- Ladies and Gentlemen

My humble duty this evening is to request **Your Excellency** to officially open the Conference on Child Labour in Agriculture in Malawi being held under the theme, “**Lets End Child Labour, Our Children Our Future**”. But before I do so, allow me **Your Excellency** to say a few remarks.

Your Excellency, Malawi being one of the developing countries is faced with a lot of challenges ranging

from socio-economic to human development. For the country to develop fully needs resources both human and financial. For the human resources to be more active, participative and productive needs to be well conversant with changes taking place in the society and this entails an educated society. One of the challenges this country is facing **Your Excellency** is an issue of using our children for economic gains.

Child labour has been identified to be an issue which is affecting the economic development of the country since it impacts on the value of our products especially in agriculture. The children have been involved and are being involved in different economic activities that have affected and keep on affecting their growth and social life. This is one of the negative developments that affect the social well being of the children and the country as a whole.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, children have been working alongside adults since time in memorial and this has been taken as a normal and common practice. They have worked like this as part of their development and in situations where this work was moderated it could not be described as having negative impact on the children. The problem has been how to differentiate between child work and child labour. It should be known that child work and child labour are different. Child work is defined as the work that does not affect the health, and personal development or interfere with the schooling of the children whereas child labour is the work that interferes with the children's schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, obliging to leave school prematurely and requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with long

working hours and heavy work. It is to this effect **Your Excellency** that the Government of Malawi through my Ministry was entailed to take a survey to establish the magnitude of child labour in Malawi.

Your Excellency, my Ministry conducted the comprehensive survey in 2002 which revealed that the 37% of children between the ages of 5 and 15 were involved in child labour. 53.5% of these children worked in agriculture and 42.1% in community and personal services sector. The rest work in other sectors which include, wholesale, retailing, quarrying, mining, construction, manufacturing, street work and commercial sex exploitation. However, after this survey, the other surveys, the Malawi Demographic Survey and Health and Multi Cluster Indicator Survey conducted in 2006 revealed that there is a drop in the magnitude of child labour from 37% to 29%. This

could be **as a result** of the work on child labour since **2002 after the results of the survey**. The results of the surveys conducted have shown that child labour occurs due to several factors which include poverty, poor teaching and learning environment, HIV and AIDS pandemic that leave child headed families that leave with no option but leave education and join employment to earn a living.

Your Excellency, child labour therefore has been one of the major concerns for Government and stakeholders and having realised the impact of child labour in our society and the **country as a whole the** Government has made some progress to address the problem. The Government has ratified the ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum age of entry into employment and Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, in 1999. Furthermore the

Government has domesticated these Conventions into her Constitution, the Employment Act of 2000 and the National Code of Conduct on child labour. All these instruments are designed to protect children from labour exploitation and work towards elimination of child labour by ensuring that children below the age of 14 are not being employed or engaged in any form of employment. The Government has also developed and launched the National Action Plan on Child Labour which is another milestone in the fight against child labour and also developed and gazetted the List of Hazardous Work for children. These are all developments aiming at eliminating child labour in Malawi **Your Excellency** and also to make sure that all worst forms of child labour are eliminated at all levels.

Your Excellency, allow me to mention here that the Government alone cannot work towards the elimination of child labour without the technical and financial assistance from development partners and social partners. These partners such as United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and United Nations Development Programme for their un tireless support towards the support in the elimination of child labour in Malawi. There are projects being supported by these organisations like the Support to National Action Plan on child labour being supported by ILO in Lilongwe, Kasungu, Mzimba and Mulanje. These organisations are not just supporting children on issues of child labour elimination but they are also engaging in the provision of health services to the children to ensure that the children are living a health life and knowing that the health person participates

well in education and other important activities aimed at moulding them into responsible citizens.

Your Excellency Distinguished participants, it is very pleasing to note that with the current leadership of **Your Excellency** this country has won back the donor support and this gives me hope that as you take children issues as one of the priority area our children will receive all the necessary support and will be protected from all sorts of abuse and exploitation. I wish to plead with the parents to stop depend much on issues of culture especially those cultural values that put our children at risk of either dropping out of school or fall into pray of contracting the deadly virus that causes AIDS. I am not saying we should not preserve culture but there are some cultural beliefs that are not acceptable like the ones of kulowa kufa, kusasa fumbi and the like which put our families at

stake that leave the children orphaned as we lose the parents to the deadly disease and thereby leave our children with no support. Another issue is that I want to discourage our parents from engaging in gender disparities where some parents **sends only male children to school and leave out the girl child** to go and work saying the male child will assist them whereas a girl will at one point get married and go to the husband and never assist them. You should remember that educating a man is educating an individual whereby educating a woman is educating a nation. It is therefore my plea that we should treat children as equals with no discrimination of whatsoever. These gender roles imposed on our children affect the opportunities available to both boys and girls and determine what they can and cannot do in their life.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, let me also say the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that girls and boys have the same rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) includes the rights of girls and women to be protected against commercial sexual exploitation, to have equal access to education and employment. The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 produced a Platform for Action that included the girl child as a critical area of concern. All these are an indication that children are a valuable asset to both parents and the nation as a whole.

Apart from UNICEF and ILO there are also other partners that have come in to support in the elimination of child labour like Japan Tobacco International (JTI) that is supporting a project being

implemented in Lilongwe and Ntcheu districts known as Achieving Reduction of Child Labour in Support of Education (ARISE). The Elimination of Child Labour in Tobacco Growing (ECLT) Foundation is also supporting a project being implemented in Mchinji, Ntchisi and Rumphi known as Child Labour Elimination Actions for Real Change (CLEAR) being implemented by a Consortium comprised of Save the Children, YONECO, CRECCOM and Total Land Care. **Your Excellency** these are the efforts aimed at eliminating child labour especially in tobacco growing sector in these districts. Let me also mention that these efforts are not taken for granted.

Your Excellency, Distinguished participants, let me take this opportunity to ask other players to emulate this good example being done by these afro

mentioned institutions to assist the government to deal with the child labour and child exploitation.

Your Excellency, Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, I also wish to appeal to the community that you must report all the evils happening to our children imposed by the adults. It is a common trend that we conceal the abuse and exploitation on our children by the adults for fear of losing our beloved ones through prosecutions and jail term. There are some women who know that their child has been abused by their husband but they conceal for fear of losing the marriage. If this is the case what do these women think about the future of these children? I think it's high time we change our behaviour and think about the future of children. There are also parents who send their children to the estate or take with them there to assist them in

tenancy work. This should stop because we are ruining the future of these children. My Ministry has drafted the Tenancy Labour Bill which once enacted into will severely punish both these parents and also scrupulous employers who do not care for the future of the children but think about their economic status.

Your Excellency, Distinguished participants ladies and gentlemen, let me mention that this Conference has been made possible with the technical assistance from ILO and financial support from the Elimination of Child Labour in Tobacco Growing (ECLT) Foundation which is also supporting the CLEAR Project in Mchinji, Ntchisi and Rumphi as earlier mentioned. These need to be commended for the good work they have done and they are doing. There is also a Task Force which was instituted by my Ministry to work on the preparations of the Conference and also the

logistical arrangements of the Conference they also need a part at the back for the good work done. I should also **thank** the members of staff from my Ministry who tirelessly worked with the Task Force and the ECLT and ILO to make the Conference a success and all those who were involved in one way or another in organising the Conference.

With these remarks **Your Excellency** I wish to request you to officially open the Conference.

Your Excellency Madam