



EMPLOYERS CONSULTATIVE ASSOCIATION OF MALAWI

“The Voice of Employers in Malawi”

PRESS RELEASE

The Government of Malawi, through the Ministry of Labour has organized a National Conference on Child Labour in Agriculture scheduled to be held at Cross Roads Hotel in Lilongwe from 5th to 6th September, 2012 under the theme “**End Child Labour in Agriculture, Our Children Our Future.**” Funding for the Conference has been provided by the Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing (ECLT) Foundation based in Geneva, Switzerland. The objective of the Conference is to demonstrate the enormous efforts that the Malawi Government with cooperation of employers and workers has achieved to the world.

Child labour in supply chains in Malawi is on the agenda of activists, governments, key trading partners, the media and public and private investors as never before. 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.** Child labour in Malawi is a feature of subsistence and small scale agriculture, but it is inextricably linked to the formal economy.

When child labour is detected, too often there is no remediation, and a problem that stymies development and prevents children from realizing their basic rights continues unchecked. To uphold universal values, promote the ILO’s decent work agenda and avoid complicity in child labour problems, employers must actively manage the risk that child labour will occur somewhere along their supply chains. ECAM views the proposed Malawi National Child Labour Conference as providing impetus to a better coordinated and more effective response to the problem of child labour.

As the employers’ umbrella body in Malawi, ECAM has participated in the implementation of successful projects (tea industry) and the development of laws and policies with the Malawi Government, the workers and civil society aimed at eliminating Child Labour.

ECAM further wishes to make the following policy statement.

THE EMPLOYERS CONSULTATIVE ASSOCIATION OF MALAWI (ECAM) RECOGNISES

The illegality of child labour in Malawi

The national and global efforts to progressively combat all forms of child labour in line with National Legislation, the National Action Plan on Child Labour and International legal instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the two ILO Conventions 138 & 182 on Minimum Employment Age and Forms of Child Labour respectively by the Malawi Government together with employers and workers.

That a child, during child hood, has a right to education and that every effort must be made to ensure that this is respected,

While that some work is not harmful and is necessary for the child's social development, in certain instances however, the volume or type of work is detrimental to a child and it also affects the child's right to education, survival, growth and development and is generally against the best interest of a child,

That 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,

That employing children can negatively affect the public perception of the company and its corporate social responsibility agenda,

That while business has an important role to play; its role cannot be seen in isolation of the role that other important social actors such as Government, Trade Unions, Civil Society and the Community must also play.