

**Opening Remarks**  
**National Conference on Child Labour in Agriculture in Malawi**  
**Cresta Crossroads Hotel**  
**Lilongwe, Malawi**  
**September 4-6, 2012**

- Your Excellency , The State President, Mrs. Joyce Banda,
- The Retired Chief Justice, Richard Banda, SC
- The Minister of Labor, Hon. Eunice Makangala, MP,
- Cabinet Ministers here present,
- The Chief Secretary, Mr. Bright Msaka, SC
- Mr. Wezi Kayira, Principal Secretary for Ministry of Labor
- Mr. Martin Clemensson, Director, ILO
- Mr. Antonio Abrunhosa, President of the ECLT Foundation/President of the International Tobacco Growers Association
- Mr. Luther Mambala, President of MCTU(Malawi Congress of Trade Unions)
- Mr. Buxton Kayuni, President of ECAM (Employers Consultative Association of Malawi).
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlement
- On behalf of the U.S. Government, I am happy to be here today to welcome the official launch of this child labor conference.
  
- We applaud your Government for taking steps to address child labor in agriculture, a sector in which according to the International Labor Organization (ILO), approximately 60 percent of working children are engaged globally.
  
- President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis maintain a strong commitment to eliminating the worst forms of child labor around the world.
  
- They recognize the need to support the work force of tomorrow—our children—who currently face a bleak employment outlook globally and are at risk of not realizing their full potential.
  
- Our children deserve the right to grow up free of exploitation and have a chance to go to school.

- Since 1995, the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) has funded over 258 child labor elimination projects in 91 countries (including Malawi), rescuing approximately 1.5 million children from exploitative child labor.
- These projects have included three key components that we believe are essential to combating child labor:
  - **First**, a legal framework to protect children against exploitative labor.
  - **Second**, effective monitoring and reporting systems to ensure adherence to child labor laws and other legal protections for children and adolescents.
  - And **third**, effective policies and social programs that offer alternatives to child labor and a path out of child labor for children and their families.
- Through USDOL's current projects being implemented by the ILO, Malawi is targeting 4,350 for withdrawal and prevention from exploitative labor in the tea and tobacco sectors.
- And for the first time, the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Labor partnered to train extension workers to protect children from hazardous work in agriculture.
- The U.S. Government also supports efforts to address child labor in agriculture in other ways. In 2009, a Consultative Group, chaired by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture was formed, comprised of government, civil society, and private industry.
- This group was instrumental in contributing to the development of the USDA Guidelines, which provide a comprehensive company program to reduce the likelihood of child labor or forced labor in agricultural supply chains.
- This year, the U.S. Department of Labor will fund a \$5 million project to pilot test specific elements of these guidelines in an agricultural supply chain.

- I encourage you to consider these and other innovative ideas over the next few days as you work to develop a plan to implement the agricultural component of the National Action Plan for Child Labor in Malawi.
- I also encourage more rigorous research in the tobacco sector to determine the specific hazards for these working children and the best practices to protect children from them.
- While the government, the private sector, international organizations, and civil society each have a unique role to play in this fight to end child labor, we can accomplish so much more when we combine our strengths through partnerships.
- It requires people committed to the issues-- from the highest levels of government, such as ministers of labor, to inspectors, to employers, to those at the grassroots--teachers, local community leaders, parents, and children themselves.
- To those at the highest level of government, I urge you to use your power to the fullest to adopt legislation to protect children working in agriculture, including those working on tenant farms, and to promote children's rights.
- To leaders in business, I ask you to set an example for your employees, customers and competitors allowing children to attend school, instead of work.
- To those working every day on child labor issues, I urge you not to lose spirit or become discouraged when you face difficult challenges because working together we can achieve meaningful results.
- All of us together can achieve important progress and help to change the lives of children and their families.
- There is a saying that "coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; but working together is success." We know that success is possible and we look forward to working with all of you to reach our shared goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labor.