

SPEECH DELIVERED BY MINISTER OF LABOUR HON. YUNUS MUSSA, MP, AT
THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE MALAWI DECENT WORK COUNTRY
PROGRAMME HELD ON 9TH AUGUST, 2011, CROSS ROADS HOTEL, LILONGWE

- The Secretary for Labour, Mrs Andrina Mchiela
- The Principal Secretary, Mr. W. Kayira
- The ILO Director and Representative for Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia based in Lusaka, Mr. Martin Clemensson
- The Labour Commissioner, Mr. Elias Zirikudondo
- The Acting Executive Director, Mr. Beyani Munthali and Captains of Business
- The Secretary General, Malawi Congress of Trade Unions, Mr. Robert Mkwezalamba and the Workers
- Distinguished guests
- Members of the Press
- Ladies and gentlemen

A very good morning to all of you. Today I am singularly honoured to be part of this historic event of the launch of the Decent Work Country programme.

I would like, at the very onset, to express my deep appreciation and thanks the ILO for its continuous support, in the area of financial and technical assistance during the development process of the Malawi Decent Work Country Programme.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome to Malawi, Mr. Martin Clemensson, Director of the ILO Office in Lusaka and members of his team who have travelled all the way to witness this auspicious occasion on the launch of the Malawi Decent Work Country Programme.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as you are all aware, the present financial crisis and the serious slowdown in the economic activities bring new challenges that we must fully take into consideration. Therefore developing policies that are responsive to this global turmoil is a must for any caring and responsible government.

The Malawi Decent Work Country Programme therefore is the government response to the global turmoil as well as the ILO's Decent Work Agenda which was initiated by the ILO Director-General, Juan Somavia. It aims at coordinating, harmonizing and aligning

technical assistance and financial resources around an achievable set of priority outcomes related to the promotion of the ILO's global Decent Work Agenda.

The ILO has in fact recommended to all its constituents a **decent work approach** to this crisis. Our Government, like the ILO, believes that the **Decent Work Agenda** is an appropriate policy framework to confront the crisis, as it is central to eradicating poverty, improving the lives of women and men and thus enabling people to live in peace and dignity.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you are all aware, work is central to people's well-being. In addition to providing income, work paves the way for broader economic and social advancement, strengthening individuals, their families and communities. Work is a source of personal dignity, family stability, peace in the community, democracies that deliver for people. Decent work therefore is indispensable to efforts to reduce poverty and a means for achieving equitable, inclusive and sustainable development in all countries both developing and developed.

It should be acknowledged that Decent Work, as defined and promoted by ILO, has all its relevance today and more particularly at this time of international crisis that our country is facing. As you are all aware, the effects are already being felt across different sectors of our economy, especially the manufacturing sector

Our visitors from the ILO would wish to know that to show government's commitment to the decent work agenda, the current Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS II) has "Labour and Employment" as a sub-theme under Theme 1 of Sustainable Economic Growth. The government would like to ensure that all policies in Malawi make decent work their central objective.

In addition to the reforms undertaken by the Government on the economic and social front, additional measures have also been undertaken in the World of Work in order to fulfill our obligations with respect to the Decent Work Agenda. The recent pension bill which was enacted in the April- May parliament session is a move towards achieving decent work in the area of social protection. Also the development of the National Employment and Labour Policy which is at an advanced stage. I am reliably informed that the stakeholders validation workshop for Policy was done end of last week.

At the level of my Ministry, we have not only spearheaded the ratification of the **Eight ILO Fundamental Conventions**, but also ensured that necessary measures are taken with a view to making all our Labour Laws in compliance with these fundamental conventions – which are of direct relevance to **Decent Work principles**.

In this regard, as you all know, Government's commitment and determination to reform the industrial relations framework, so as to promote effective collective bargaining and strengthen dialogue with social partners, has been translated in the adoption of the **Employment Act of 2000** as well as the subsequent reforms undertaken since 2007.

The Industrial **Relations Act** provides for necessary conditions, and the legal and institutional framework for effective **Collective Bargaining**, which remains the Trade Unions most important function. The focus is more on finding solutions to industrial relations problems and reaching agreements within a given time-frame.

Ladies and gentlemen, having said this, let me assure all of you, particularly representatives from Trade Unions and Employers Organisations – that Decent Work is and will be at the heart of our national economic and social strategies. In fact, much prominence is being laid by Government on the creation of productive and decent employment, which is considered central to efforts made towards poverty reduction as a means of achieving equitable, inclusive, and sustainable development.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as I always emphasize, the success of the Malawi Decent Work Country Programme, and indeed any other government policy, lies in our collective responsibility to fully participate in our respective capacities and mandates. The Programme is not for the Ministry of Labour or Government only, but for all of us – government, employers, workers, NGOs, the civil society, our cooperating partners and the general public .

I would like therefore to call upon all of you and all stakeholders out there to take your responsibilities seriously in implementing the activities set out in the Malawi Decent Work Country Programme document. The Programme represents Malawi's priorities in Labour and Employment issues in the quest to achieve the Decent Work Agenda for all Malawians. I thus invite our cooperating partners to also prioritize our needs in their assistance to various programmes and institutions in the country. Such a structured programme, if well implemented, will definitely contribute enormously to employment creation and poverty alleviation in the country. I would like to thank all our cooperating partners for their unwavering support you give us.

With these few remarks, it is now my pleasure to declare the Malawi Decent Country Programme officially launched.

I thank you all for your attention.