



**STATEMENT BY**

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- **Thank you Mr. Chairperson**
- **Your Excellences, Heads of State and Government,**
- **The Director-General of FAO, Prof. Jose, Graziano da Silva,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. Mr. Chairperson, I am greatly honoured and indeed privileged to address the 39<sup>th</sup> Session of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Conference debate on the theme “**Breaking the Cycle of Rural Poverty and Hunger by Strengthening Rural Resilience: Social Protection and Sustainable Agricultural Development**”

Mr. Chairman this is very relevant to my country.

2. Allow me at the outset to congratulate **Prof. Jose, Graziano da Silva**, on his re-election as Director General of the FAO for the next four years. We consider his re-election as a confirmation of the confidence and trust that we have in him to steer FAO to fulfil its mandates to achieve the global challenge of eradication of extreme poverty, hunger and under nourishment. Mr. Director General, be assured of Malawi's support on this task.

3. Mr. Chairperson, like other low income countries, Malawi depends on agriculture for her economy. Agriculture accounts for about 30 percent of the gross domestic product and 80 percent of the country's export earnings. The sector further employs 80 percent of the workforce and provides a major source of livelihoods to over 80 percent our population that mainly lives in the rural areas subsisting on agriculture.
4. Mr. Chairperson, the Government of Malawi, realizes that to reach the majority of the poor households who are based in the rural areas, there is need to prioritize agriculture sector to ensure inclusive growth and poverty reduction. The National policy framework- Malawi Growth and Development Strategy places the highest priority on agriculture among other key priorities. This is supported by the sector policy framework, Agriculture Sector Wide Approach (ASWAp) which outlines strategies for achieving the MGDS targets in the agriculture sector. Our national policies are linked to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the sectoral

framework is aligned to the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

5. Mr. Chairperson the smallholder farmers are seriously constrained such that they have limited access to productivity enhancing technologies including fertilizers and improved seed varieties. From 2005, the Government of Malawi has implemented the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) with the aim of increasing agricultural productivity to improve food security at both household and national levels. The programme has been making available to smallholder poor farmers a package of inputs comprising improved seeds, fertilizers and pesticides at a subsidized price.
6. This programme has been associated with improved productivity and increased maize production with surpluses recorded over the past nine years except the previous growing season (2013/14). For the first time Malawi, was able to export maize against the long trend of massive food importation.
7. This season however, Chairperson we experienced unfavourable weather conditions characterized by late

onset of rains, flooding, prolonged dry spells and early cessation of rains. Consequently, we are projecting to have a general decline in production of most crops as compared to last season and since 2005/6. Our staple food crop, maize is projected to drop by about 28 percent.

8. While Government recognizes that our population will be able to complement their staple food with other cereals and cassava and sweet potatoes. However, provisions have been made to procure from locally and from within the region to meet our maize requirements. We thank our development partners who have pledged to support us to procure maize and restock our strategic grain reserves to ensure that we do not starve.
9. In responding to the disaster that hit our country, government in collaboration with partners worked very hard to help our suffering brothers and sisters with food, and temporary shelter. Government with support from development partners as well as the non state actors provided some early maturing crop varieties to farmers to utilize residual moisture so that farmers don't

completely miss the season. Government also stepped up the campaign to maximize irrigation facilities.

10. To mitigate adverse effects of climate change on food security, the Government of Malawi has developed the “Greenbelt Initiative” which aims at intensifying irrigation farming in different localities along our lake and other perennial rivers. The Initiative will ensure that we get good crop harvest under irrigation and the possibility of getting 2 or 3 harvests in a year. Further, government is promoting better land husbandry and climate smart agriculture as integral components of agricultural development.
11. Government is also encouraging diversification of farming enterprises to include livestock as well as fisheries. Under livestock development, government in collaboration with other players including development partners is implementing small stock livestock programmes, to enhance wide ownership of livestock. These are usually used as alternative source of income, besides being reliable sources of proteins for the population.

12. In the same way government is encouraging aquaculture and is supporting the fish farmers with fingerlings for stocking their ponds. Fish is a single most reliable source of protein for communities because of its wide availability and affordability.
13. Mr. Chairperson, considering the limited number of people reached with subsidized inputs, coupled with climate variability, there are sections of people who remain without food. This number has been fluctuating overtime. To protect these smallholder households, Government of Malawi developed and approved the Social Protection Policy in 2012. The policy recognizes that poverty exists in three categories: Ultra (extreme) poverty without labour capacity; ultra - poverty with labour capacity and moderately poor.
14. Thus specific programmes have been designed to cater for each category of poverty with emphasis on rural poverty. Programmes designed to especially assist the ultra-poor without labour include: Social Cash Transfers, School Feeding Programme and Food Transfers. Social Cash Transfer programme is underway in

18 districts while the School Feeding Programme is reaching 1991 primary schools across Malawi.

15. Social support programmes for the ultra-poor with labour include Public Works Programme (PWP), Village Savings and Loans (VSL), Technical skills, Community Savings and Investment Promotion (COMSIP). These programmes are being implemented across the country and have already been producing commendable results in reducing poverty.
16. The moderately poor are being targeted with Micro-credit Facilities, skills formation as well as long term Public Works Programmes.
17. Chairperson, let me conclude my remarks by saying that agriculture is very important in as far as addressing widespread poverty is concerned. We therefore, need to take deliberate policy measures to promote agriculture because we know the benefits are wider and more inclusive. The programmes that strengthen rural resilience in the wake of natural disasters need to be supported.



**I thank you for your attention**