

**STATEMENT BY THE MALAWI GOVERNMENT AT
THE HIGH LEVEL CONFERENCE ON WORLD FOOD
SECURITY AND CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE
CHANGE AND BIO ENERGY IN ROME, ITALY,
3rd – 5th JUNE 2008**

**THE STATEMENT IS DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF
THE MALAWI GOVERNMENT BY MRS ANDRINA
MCHIELA, SECRETARY FOR IRRIGATION AND
WATER DEVELOPMENT**

Chairperson, Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates

Malawi welcomes this Conference and the Draft Framework of Action currently in circulation.

In the past decade, agricultural production in Malawi has varied significantly with acute shortages of food in some years. Consequently, food shortages have led to: low economic growth rates, large balance of payment deficits, overvaluation of the local currency, high interest rates, malnutrition and high incidences of poverty. Some of the factors that contributed to these problems included; adverse effects of liberalisation of agricultural markets; complete withdrawal of the state in markets and operations of agricultural inputs, services and produce; removal of subsidies towards agricultural support; high prevalence of droughts, dry spells and floods; rising fertiliser prices; and, low levels of investment in agriculture.

In addressing these problems, the Malawi Government has undertaken the following measures:

First, from the 2005/2006 agricultural season, Malawi introduced the targeted agricultural input subsidy program. The program aims at improving affordability and accessibility of fertilisers and seeds to poor smallholder farmers for them to achieve food security and income generation. Through this program, targeted smallholder farmers who cannot afford to pay for expensive agricultural inputs, in particular, fertilisers, hybrid maize seeds and pesticides have benefited from subsidized agricultural inputs. I am happy to report that from the three years that Malawi has implemented this program, the results have been

very encouraging. Coming from a decade of food deficits and negative economic growth rates, for three consecutive years now, Malawi has enjoyed significant grain surpluses and high economic growth rates of not less than 7.4% annually. This has been a remarkable achievement on our part and we have managed to sell some of our surplus maize to neighbouring countries.

Second, in line with the Maputo Declaration of the African Heads of States and Governments in 2003, Malawi has increased its budgetary allocation to agriculture to more than 10% per year. This was done after the realisation that growth in the agriculture sector is only possible if we invest considerably in technologies that bring higher returns. In the current financial year, overall expenditure on agriculture is slightly above 14% of the national budget, and we are committed to continue scaling up investment in the agriculture sector.

Third, Malawi has formulated and will be implementing the Program Based Approach called the Agriculture Development Program (ADP) which is being aligned to the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Under the same principles of CAADP, the ADP aims to achieve a 6% growth rate in the agriculture sector. The overall objective of this program is to improve food security whilst ensuring sustainable use of natural resources. Further, the program is emphasizing on research and improved extension services. Extensive training of front line staff in agriculture extension services and rehabilitation of some agriculture training institutions are being undertaken by Government.

The program is currently budgeted at US\$1 billion for the next five years and further support towards the implementation of this program is welcome.

Fourth, post harvest losses in Malawi still pose a big challenge for our food production initiatives. At present, the country experiences post harvest maize grain losses of about 40% due to pests, weevils and poor storage facilities by our farmers. In order to address this problem, the Government is constructing storage facilities at national level, and with timely support from development partners, small metallic grain silos are being fabricated and constructed at village level with the aim of improving grain storage among the poor rural communities. In the 2007/08 financial year alone, a total of 600 such storage facilities have been constructed and distributed to poor rural communities.

Fifth, Malawi has suffered extensively from effects of climate change. In the last three decades, droughts and floods, two of the major symptoms of climate change, have been persistent. The number of drought and dry spell years have increased from one-in-ten years in the 1970's to eight-in-ten years in the 2000's. Both drought and floods have adversely affected agricultural production and food security. To mitigate against the effects of climate change, Government is implementing a number of programs which include; afforestation, irrigation development, promotion of rain water harvesting technologies; construction of multipurpose dams; improving capacity of our early warning systems and promotion of early maturing and drought tolerant varieties.

Under irrigation development, the country has huge potential for irrigation farming in Malawi which is not fully being exploited. We therefore, welcome continued support from our co-operating partners in this cause. We strongly believe that investment in irrigation agriculture is one of the major means of attaining national and global food security.

Finally, let me thank all our co-operating partners for helping us make progress in some of our achievements. We look forward to your continued support and greater collaboration.

With these remarks, I end my Statement. Thank you all for your attention.