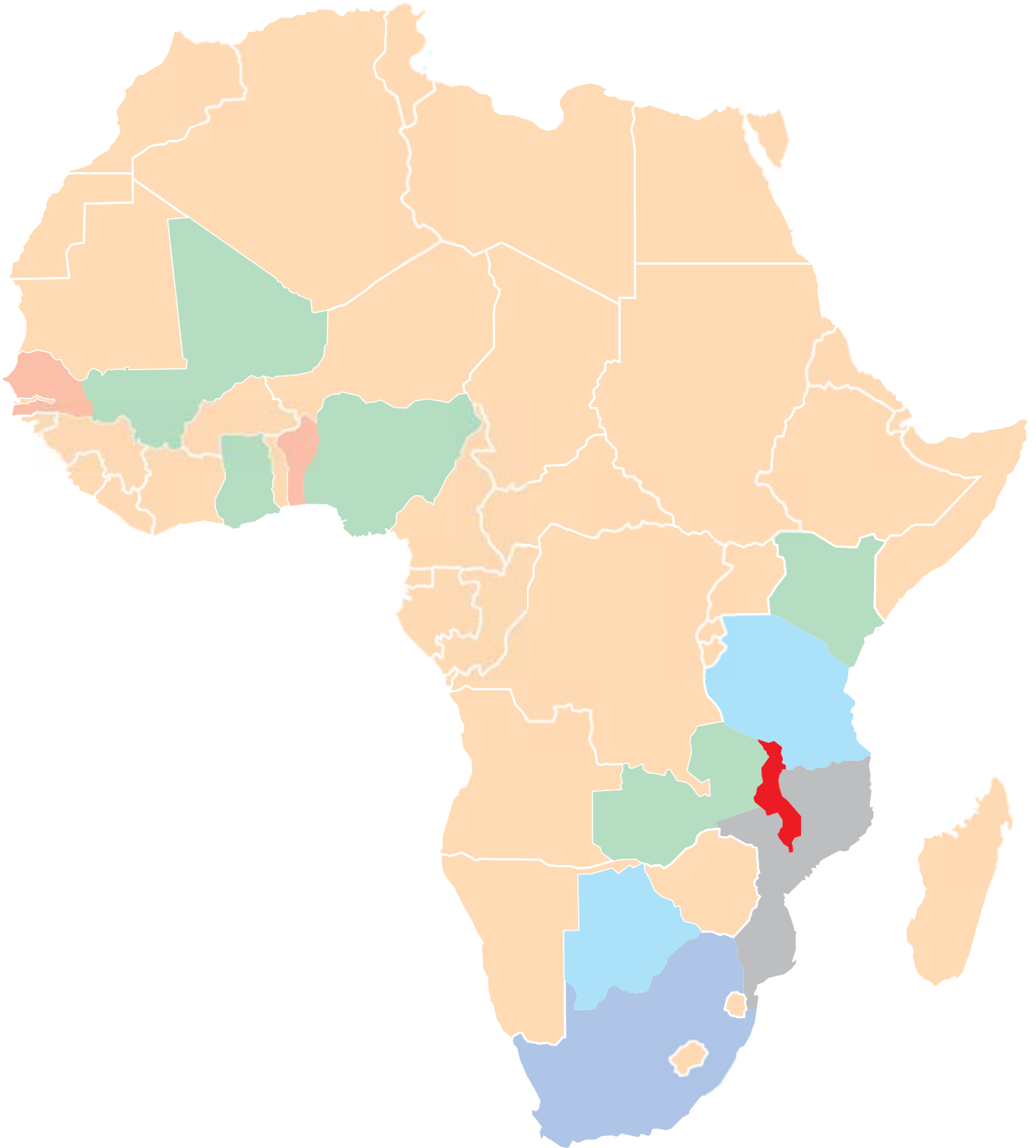


# MALAWI

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**Statement Made at the Swearing-In Ceremony, *The Road to Prosperity: A New Vision for Malawi*, by His Excellency Dr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi**  
**24 May 2004**

**Blantyre**



Today is a very happy day in my life. It is also an important day in the history of Malawi. Today is a day of joy and celebration for the United Democratic Front [UDF], the Alliance for Democracy [AFORD], and the New Congress for Democracy [NCD]. It is also a happy day for all Malawians because we have had our third multiparty general elections that have been free and fair and also peaceful. All Malawians have therefore a good reason to be proud that we have [reached] yet another milestone in consolidating our emerging democracy.

It is therefore with a deep sense of humility, joy, and fulfilment that I take this opportunity to thank all Malawians for the support you have given me. I am indeed overwhelmed by the resounding victory of our three parties, the UDF, AFORD, and NCD, in the general elections. I am humbled by the confidence which you have placed in me as your next president. I wish to assure the Malawi nation that I do not take this for granted.

I invited you, the people of Malawi, to join me and the First Lady in celebrating this great occasion.

I am also particularly privileged and happy to welcome to Malawi the heads of state and government from [the] SADC [South African Development Community] and COMESA [Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa] for sparing your precious time to come here to witness this occasion.

I wish to assure Your Excellencies that I and my government greatly appreciate and value your coming to Malawi. Your presence here signifies the warm and cordial relations that exist between Malawi and your respective countries. It also sig-

nifies the importance of the solidarity and brotherhood that is being cemented in our two regional organisations of COMESA and SADC.

Through our regional organisations, we have become members of the same family. Through these organisations, we are birds of the same feathers, and as such, we must flock together. Therefore, your coming here is of great significance to Malawi and to me as its new president.

I also wish to sincerely thank His Excellency Dr. Bakili Muluzi for the confidence [he] has placed in me and for his kind support materially and morally during the run-up to my election to this high office. My family and I, as well as all my relatives, are deeply grateful to him for this act of great magnanimity.

Let me also warmly thank the UDF National Executive Committee for unanimously electing me by secret ballot [as] your presidential candidate during our national convention last year. I wish to assure you that I shall live up to your expectations.

I also wish to thank most sincerely Dr. Chakufwa Chihana and the entire membership of AFORD for the support you have given me. You have worked very hard during the campaign and have spent sleepless nights during the period leading to the general elections.

To Dr. Hetherwick Ntaba, I also say thank you very much for withdrawing from the presidential race in order to support me. The support of your membership is also deeply appreciated.

## MY VISION FOR MALAWI

Let me start my speech by outlining my vision for Malawi. I am very optimistic that Malawi will get out of poverty and begin to attain sustainable growth and development.

As I take over the mantle of leadership of our country, I am acutely aware of the immense challenges and problems that I shall face. I am also aware that my country expects a lot from me. However, I am cognizant of the fact that Malawians are tired of being poor and want to move on to prosperity. Therefore, this is a challenge I am ready and willing to accept.

In order to espouse my vision for Malawi, let us look at the developments in our country during the past ten years. This has been a rich and rewarding period for us. We have learned what can be achieved if we are determined to change things for the better.

The first phase, from 1994 to 1999, saw the transition from one-party autocratic and oppressive rule to multiparty democracy. Our government was preoccupied with changing the mind-set and institutions for democracy so that we Malawians can begin to believe in ourselves. Within a short period of time, Dr. Muluzi has transformed our country from the oppressive one-party rule to multiparty democracy and has also placed our nation on the list of emerging democracies in Africa.

The second phase, from 1999 to 2004, saw the consolidation of institutions for democracy, economic transformation, and social enhancement. We have at the same time strengthened the structures of our economy, human rights, the rule of law, and fundamental freedoms. During this phase, Dr. Muluzi has transformed our country from an international pariah to a nation that has gained the respect of the international community. More important, [presently] there is no political detainee in our jails. This is a remarkable achievement.

The third phase, from 2004 to 2009, will indeed be a very exciting period for Malawi. We shall see the emergence of Malawi from poverty to prosperity. Building on the solid experience we have gained in the past ten years, we are ready to utilise the institutions and structures for economic transition to empower our people, especially the rural poor, to stand on their own by introducing a number of income-generating programmes and activities.

My vision is to see our country resume economic growth fast enough to bring about prosperity, to reduce poverty significantly, and to make life better for everyone. It is also my vision to see that our country transforms from being a predominantly importing and consuming country to being a predominantly producing and exporting country, and to gradually emerge as an indus-

trial nation capable of transforming our agricultural primary commodities, other raw materials, and minerals so as to create new wealth for our people.

In order to realise this vision, my mission is to instil confidence in the economy and to persuade Malawians to believe in ourselves [so] that we can achieve macroeconomic growth and reduce poverty through sound financial management and fiscal prudence. My mission is also to create more jobs and to distribute income by promoting significant domestic and foreign financing and investment in our agricultural processing, industrial production, and manufacturing, thereby increasing the supply of goods and services for the domestic and international markets.

## OUR COLLECTIVE CHALLENGE

I now turn to the challenges facing Malawi. My point of departure is to state that Malawi is not a poor country. But it is the people of Malawi who are poor. Our collective challenge, then, is to find a new formula that can get our people out of poverty. Through practical experience gained during the past ten years, a national consensus has emerged that we need to develop a new set of priorities that will enable our country to develop fast and to move out of poverty.

However, I am very conscious of the resource constraints that we are facing. It is clear, therefore, that we cannot do everything at once. My government will initially focus on four major priorities.

The first priority is to implement public-sector reforms aimed at creating stable macroeconomic conditions for growth and instilling donor confidence in our ability to adhere to international commitments.

The second priority is to introduce deep-rooted private-sector reforms aimed at developing and strengthening business enterprises to contribute more positively to economic growth.

The third priority is to introduce new agricultural-sector reforms aimed at developing agriculture and making Malawi a “hunger-free nation.”

The fourth priority is to institute civil service reforms aimed at improving the conditions of service and professionalism of our civil servants,

and developing [a] national capacity to resuscitate economic growth.

I shall discuss these priorities in some detail later. For the moment, let me underscore the fact that this political platform lays down a clear path for sustainable macroeconomic growth that addresses the issue of poverty in our country. I believe that the new reforms are the *sine qua non* for effectively implementing the UDF/AFORD/NCD Manifesto and will be the basis for a new Malawi Economic Programme that can be fully supported by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

The other objective of the reforms is to strengthen our relations with the donor community and to rebuild confidence and trust in our government’s commitment to implement the Malawi Economic Growth Strategy, the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy (MPRS), the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of the United Nations.

## CREATING STABLE MACROECONOMIC CONDITIONS

With regard to achieving sustainable economic growth, there is no disagreement that in order to create stable macroeconomic conditions, thereby kick-starting economic growth in our country, fundamental policy reforms are needed in the public sector. The objective of such reforms should be to improve economic and political governance by instituting new systems of managing fiscal policy, public expenditures, domestic borrowing, interest rates, inflation, and exchange rates. The objective of such reforms shall be to create stable macroeconomic conditions for attaining sustainable economic growth, poverty alleviation, and economic prosperity.

The UDF/AFORD/NCD Manifesto stipulates that economic prosperity in Malawi can be achieved only through the resumption of economic growth and through proper management of public expenditures. I, therefore, see the imperative of reforms in macroeconomic fundamentals so as to stimulate the production and dis-

tribution of wealth. For poverty reduction to be effectively achieved within the foreseeable future, my government plans to have a GDP [gross domestic product] growth rate of at least 6 percent per annum.

This can essentially be achieved through sound economic governance that creates a stable macroeconomic environment for [the] economic growth and prosperity of our country. We shall, therefore, design and implement effective policies aimed at achieving low inflation, low interest rates, and stable exchange rates.

Our country is in the middle of a war against poverty, hunger, and deprivation. We have interest rates that are high and unsustainable. Small and medium enterprises are priced out of the market, as they cannot afford to borrow at current rates. Exchange rates are unstable, and inflation is still relatively high.

This instability can partially be explained by our inability to institute fiscal discipline and reduce public expenditure. We have domestic debt that is clearly unsustainable and is eating through our resources, thereby inhibiting growth. In order to get out of this poverty trap, we need to reduce public expenditure and domestic borrowing.

Concomitant with the above, I shall adopt effective measures to significantly reduce public expenditure, especially ordinary recurrent transactions, and eliminate domestic borrowing through stronger fiscal discipline in the allocation, utilisation, and accountability of resources at all levels of public expenditure.

In that regard, I shall institute measures aimed at:

- reducing significantly the size of the cabinet to be in line with our limited resources;
- rationalising the functions and operations of statutory corporations to reduce over-expenditure;
- maintaining tight budgetary controls to eliminate “below the line” budgetary items and to reduce travel expenditure;
- moving the residency of the president from Blantyre to Lilongwe, where the capital city is located; and

- reviewing the number of state palaces and residences in order to reduce public expenditure.

Let me further elucidate the need for a smaller cabinet. To begin with, I am painfully aware that a reduction in the size of the cabinet is indeed a bitter pill to swallow, but the alternative is economic collapse and disaster. I do not believe that Malawians want this to happen. I also do not believe that we the people of Malawi want to terminate our relationship with the World Bank, the IMF, and the international donor community.

Therefore, I shall be asking Malawians to accept a small sacrifice by having a lean but highly committed cabinet that can deliver. In other words, people will be appointed essentially on merit so as to help move our country from poverty to prosperity.

## TOWARDS A CORRUPTION-FREE NATION

An important aspect of economic reform is to stamp out corruption. Corruption is the enemy of growth and prosperity. It robs the government and the people, especially the poor, of their legitimate right to economic prosperity by diverting resources away from economic and social development into the coffers of a few.

Therefore, through a zero-tolerance option, my government shall eliminate corruption by implementing, inter alia, the following measures:

- establish[ing] clear “performance criteria” and “benchmarks” by which government spending will be regularly audited and validated by independent auditors;
- designing an efficient system of financial management and monitoring the allocation and utilisation of all resources so that fraud can be detected as it occurs in the project or programme cycle and prompt measures taken to address the situation;
- ensuring swift investigation, prosecution, and punishment of public officers at all levels of responsibility who are found guilty of corruption, theft, mismanagement, and abuse of power in all its forms; [and]

- strengthening the offices of the Accountant General, Auditor General, Public Accounts Committee, and the Anti-Corruption Bureau to ensure that officials and politicians entrusted with public funds act in a transparent manner with regard to the utilisation, reporting, and accountability of public funds.

## DECENTRALISATION

It is my firm belief that an important objective of the public-sector reform programme is to decentralise power to rural communities through district assemblies. The aim is to empower the district assemblies to design and implement decisions that directly affect the rural communities. This is based on the recognition that effective decentralisation requires political will, commitment, and professional competence [on the part of] civil servants, and [therefore], the reforms will encourage sectoral ministries to delegate responsibilities and resources to urban and district assemblies. In particular: My government shall support such devolution by the creation of a sound financial base in the district assemblies that will enable them to be transparent and accountable. We shall build and strengthen the human and institutional capacities within district assemblies to enable them to carry out the enormous responsibilities that were performed by central government.

These measures will be accompanied by the devolution of the management of basic social services to urban and district assemblies, including education, health, water, and roads.

## WORKING WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

When I look at the prosperity of Malawi through the eyes of the private sector, I am convinced that the road map to prosperity dictates that we should have effective private-sector reforms that aim at creating a conducive and enabling climate for domestic and foreign investment. I am also convinced of the need to open up new

windows of opportunity for the people of this country to take full charge of the economy and investment decisions.

This will entail reforming and restructuring institutions for production, manufacturing, distribution, and trade so as to increase the production of goods for the domestic market and for exports. Such reforms will result in creating new jobs and hence reduce poverty.

I believe that the way forward for us is to develop high-performing entrepreneurship—small-, medium-, and large-scale—to transform our economic and productive structures. This would lead to the creation of new job opportunities and increases in local and foreign investment in both the productive and service sectors.

Clearly, no one will disagree that this calls for well-focused private-sector reforms aimed at creating an enabling and conducive environment for the entrepreneurs to respond to government policies and programmes for industrialisation of the country.

My government will therefore develop the private sector by creating new opportunities for many Malawians to start new businesses and thus become meaningfully self-employed and financially independent.

As an important element [in] the creation of such a conducive environment, my government will also implement the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), [which] is intended to create an enabling environment for private-sector development through the development of infrastructures such as roads, railways, telecommunications, and energy.

## TAKING DEVELOPMENT TO RURAL AREAS

Through many years of experience in other countries, I am convinced that an integral part of private-sector reforms is to shift the development focus to rural communities. The rural area is the battleground for the war against poverty. This is because a larger percentage of our people in rural, urban, and peri-urban areas continues to live in abject poverty. Many of these communities

have no access to basic social amenities such as clean water, health services, decent housing, and good sanitation.

I am determined to change this by implementing policies specifically designed to balance economic and social prosperity between the urban and rural areas. To that end, my government will create a special Rural Development Fund (RDF) of not less than K500 million, specifically to provide soft loans to indigenous Malawians to enable them to start new businesses or to expand existing ones.

In order to make such a fund more effective in alleviating poverty, special priority will be given to the following households, in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas, that are presently facing tremendous economic and social problems:

- households headed by women who single-handedly take up the responsibility of raising and educating children without a husband;
- households headed by elderly people with no financial means but who look after grandchildren whose parents have died of HIV/AIDS and other illnesses;
- households headed by small children who are forced to look after other children because their parents have died and no one is taking care of them; and
- households headed by people with physical and other disabilities who struggle to make a living and to care for their families.

I want to implement this major policy shift in order to directly empower rural farmers to add value to agricultural and other products from the village communities. This will in turn create a new system of economic and financial governance that gives more power to local leaders in the communities and that ensures that rural people take control of their own destinies.

This loan programme will supplement other ongoing projects such as the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF III), the One Village–One Product (OVOP) programme, and the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy.

## PRODUCING ENOUGH FOOD FOR ALL

It is a dichotomy that although Malawi is an agricultural country, we are unable to feed ourselves. I am determined to change this. I believe we have the capacity to grow enough food for all and to produce other agricultural commodities for agro-processing industries. Therefore, the focus of my programmes for agricultural-sector reforms is to make Malawi a “hunger-free nation.”

At the risk of stating the obvious, hunger and malnutrition constitute the biggest challenge facing our national development policy. I am convinced that we cannot adequately empower the people without giving them enough food to eat. This will come about through the provision of improved agricultural inputs, such as seeds, fertilisers, insecticides, irrigation, extension services, and marketing.

I cannot therefore overemphasise that Malawi’s future economic and social transformation depends upon viable and efficient agriculture. In the new Malawi development paradigm, the UDF/AFORD/NCD, government will continue to give high priority to agriculture as the basis for maintaining sustainable livelihoods and [the] economic growth of our economy.

As an immediate solution to the food shortage problem, my government will continue to distribute free food to the poor, the elderly, children, people with disabilities, and those living in abject poverty. It is the responsibility of any government to feed its people. However, as a long-term solution, I shall shift our policy focus towards enabling the people to grow their own food and [to] be able to feed themselves.

We shall be guided by the old adage: Give a person a fish, he will be hungry again, but teach a person how to fish, and he will never be hungry again. We shall not only teach our people how to produce more food, but we shall also teach them to do this more efficiently.

Therefore, in the new road map, high priority will be given to:

- encouraging dietary diversification to decrease overreliance on maize meal, by

growing other food crops such as cassava, potatoes, rice, pumpkins, millet, and sorghum;

- increasing food production through winter cropping and irrigation methods using low-cost technologies. We shall supply more rural farmers with treadle pumps, sprinklers, and motorized pumps;
- removing all taxes on staple foods such as maize, beans, meat, rice, cassava, potatoes, and other food crops;
- expanding and strengthening access to agriculture inputs, especially among women and other vulnerable groups by increasing the number of “starter packs” in the 2004 planting season and subsequent years to reach more vulnerable individuals;
- reducing the price of fertiliser and agricultural chemicals to make them affordable to poor rural farmers;
- facilitating the establishment of credit co-operatives or village banks and providing financial support capitalisation of village-based credit schemes;
- developing viable small-, medium-, and large-scale irrigation schemes throughout the country in order to tap the huge water resources of Lake Malawi, Lake Chilwa, the Shire River, and the many rivers in this country; [and]
- introducing “water cropping” by encouraging our people in the villages to construct small earth dams that can hold water for irrigation. Over time this will result in raising the water table throughout Malawi, thereby making even dried-up boreholes produce water.

## DIVERSIFYING THE MALAWI ECONOMY

I now turn to the issue of diversifying the Malawi economy. This has become pertinent because an error of judgment was made in the past when we allowed our country to depend only on tobacco for the major portion of our export earnings. This made Malawi seriously vulnerable to externalities and even machination by unscrupu-

lous tobacco traders. It also resulted in our becoming chronically dependent on donors for budgetary support.

I am pleased to say that economists in Malawi agree that our country should not depend on one agricultural commodity for driving this economy. There is also consensus that Malawi needs to break into the global markets if we [are] to survive as an economic entity.

In consideration of this, the next few years will see high priority being given to the diversification of industrial production and manufacturing in order to increase the supply of high-quality goods for the domestic and international markets. I believe this is the only way forward for us.

I believe there is a broad agreement in Malawi on the negative impacts on the economy resulting from the vagaries of globalisation. Therefore, my government will diversify our economy by establishing a “basket of commodities” that will initially include cotton, tobacco, sugar, tea, rice, and paprika.

This implies that we shall anchor our macro-economic stabilisation programmes on the performance of these commodities in the international markets. The cultivation of other cash crops such as fish, cassava, groundnuts, sunflowers, and macadamia nuts will also be enhanced so as to increase our export earning capacity, thereby guaranteeing the stability of the kwacha.

In the pursuit of this new economic drive, I shall place the highest priority on diversifying the sources of foreign exchange through the establishment of an integrated cotton textile industry. I plan to persuade local and foreign investors to invest in several cotton-processing industrial subsets, such as:

- cotton ginning that will enable our country to fetch higher value for our cotton while at the same time selling cottonseed for oil and cake for livestock feeding;
- cotton spinning that will enable our country to sell different varieties of yarns, thereby adding value to our cotton;
- cotton weaving that will create possibilities for establishing plants for manufacturing dyes using local materials such as paprika, as

well as using cassava and rice to produce starch;

- cotton fabric printing that will introduce a whole range of new designs suited for our local conditions and for external trade; and
- garment manufacturing that will open up new windows of opportunity for our country to produce a wide range of finished garments such as shirts, dresses, bath towels, bedding and linen, tablecloths, and a variety of uniforms for civilian, police, and military use.

I am sure Malawians will agree that the introduction of the integrated cotton textiles industry will, through forward and backward linkages with other industries, enable our country to create thousands of new jobs for our people. We shall also achieve a more balanced economic growth, stable exchange rates, and better redistribution of wealth and prosperity.

With regard to other commodities in the basket, my government will increase export earnings from tobacco by adding value to tobacco through [the] manufacturing of cigarettes, pipe tobacco, snuff, cigars, and cigarillos, [which] will also create new jobs for our people.

The sugar industry also needs to be given a boost by increasing investment in sugar production and by introducing better technologies for processing so that our sugar continues to meet international standards.

Similarly, the tea industry will be reviewed and reorganised to contribute more positively to the economic prosperity of our people. We plan to facilitate and to attract new investments while improving the quality of our tea in the international markets.

Concerning paprika as an important cash crop, my government will give [it] higher priority than has been the case in the past. I believe we can improve our exports of paprika, thereby enhancing its contribution to our economic transformation. To that end, I plan to increase investment in research, production, processing, and marketing of this crop and to encourage more farmers to grow this cash crop.

## CIVIL SERVICE REFORMS

Research conducted in this country has confirmed that an integral aspect of the road map for prosperity is the reform of the civil service. The main objective is to introduce better conditions of service [and] improved salary structures, especially for the lower-level officials. We also need to adequately equip civil servants to become more efficient through training and skills upgrading, professional guidance, and motivation.

I have so much confidence in our civil service. Many of them are adequately educated but may lack motivation and direction. I am convinced that civil servants can be motivated to become fully professional, patriotic, and efficient in designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating our national development projects and programmes.

## EDUCATION SYSTEM REFORMS

Consultations with experts in the education field have revealed that a good early grounding in education eventually determines an individual's performance in career and business in later years. It is for this reason that my government will continue to provide free quality primary education, because this has enabled many children whose parents are poor to be educated.

We are mindful that such phenomenal increases have created other problems, including shortage of classroom blocks and teachers, lack of adequate teaching and learning resources, and the challenges of motivating pupils and students to work harder and to excel. But we are convinced that we have made a good start towards reducing illiteracy in our country. We have put in place appropriate policies to address the teaching problems.

My government will introduce reforms in the education sector that respond to our changing macroeconomic realities. First, we shall redesign the school curricula so as to train students in primary and secondary schools to look for business opportunities rather than for white-collar jobs.

Second, business studies will be introduced alongside ongoing vocational training, specifically geared at preparing the child at an early age to become business oriented.

High priority will be given to the development of more institutions of higher learning. In particular, I shall establish a new University of Lilongwe to increase the intake of secondary school [graduates] in our universities, thereby building new capacities for development.

We shall adopt a conscious policy for adaptation of science and technology for macroeconomic growth in our country. High priority will be given to locally based research institutions to adapt and utilise science and technology specifically designed to convert our agricultural primary commodities, minerals, and other natural resources into new wealth. The government will also provide research grants to our local institutions to develop new food products from maize, millet, and sorghum, so as to diversify our dietary habits.

To achieve these objectives, I plan to convene an education review conference before the end of the year where all stakeholders in education and capacity building, including the opposition and the private sector, will review the education curricula in our country. This conference will chart a new road map for the education sector.

## EMPOWERING WOMEN TO PROSPERITY

I now turn to the role and contribution of women in development. I am fully conscious that the marginalisation [of] and discrimination [against] women in the development process is not compatible with the new reforms. I am also aware that women have an important role to play in the political, economic, and social transformation of our nation. My government shall accordingly intensify programmes aimed at removing illiteracy, underemployment, and exploitation of women. We shall also place the highest priority on increasing the number of women in responsible policy-making positions.

My government will also give high priority to addressing the problems of gender imbalances in

the education, economic, and social sectors. We shall remove all obstacles hindering the full participation of women in the transformation of our country. Therefore, we shall:

- strengthen policies that remove obstacles for women and girls in the pursuit of education and skills upgrading;
- consolidate the Girls Attainment of Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE) project by introducing new and more innovative programmes that will not only keep girls in school, but will also make them excel; and
- build more girls' boarding secondary schools to increase the number of girls having access to higher education.

In the business and economic fields, my government shall financially empower women by creating special business and investment schemes that ensure that they have full access to loans and credit, as well as training in the organisation and management of business ventures.

I also consider the rights and privileges of women in the political, economic, and social fields to be an important aspect of democracy. My government will enforce laws against all forms of discrimination against them. We shall reform the laws governing a woman's property rights and inheritance as well as in the ownership of family estates after the death of her husband to permanently stamp out the practise of "property grabbing" by relatives of the deceased husband.

Furthermore, my government will strengthen and enforce the laws aimed at stopping violence against women, sexual abuse, and the harassment of women and girls in homes, schools, workplaces, and any other place.

## THE YOUTH IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The way forward for our country is to effectively harness the potential of the youth and to equip them with [the] knowledge and skills necessary for their full participation in the social, cultural, economic, and political development of the coun-

try. The areas of focus will be on skills training for self-employment, preventive health services, and provision of recreational facilities.

More specifically, we shall empower the youth by creating new opportunities for self-employment by providing soft loans to enable them to start their own businesses. We shall also establish new vocational and business training centres, especially for vendors, that will empower a larger number of youths to stand on their own financially through viable business ventures.

In order to ensure that the young men and women are fully involved in nation building, I shall establish a National Development Service for the Youth (NDS), whose main mission will be to train, equip, and empower our young men and women to participate effectively in [the] economic, political, social, and cultural development of our nation. Through the NDS, our youth will be deployed to assist in relief and rehabilitation, building and repairing homes for the poor, the elderly, and [the] physically handicapped, [and] the construction of social infrastructures under MASAF and other development projects.

## BASIC HEALTH AND THE HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC

In addition to poverty, Malawi is waging another war, [a war] against HIV/AIDS. In that war, the effective management of basic health and the HIV/AIDS pandemic has become essential for our nation's economic productivity and survival. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a human crisis that affects the political, economic, social, and medical structures of our nation. [Thus], a holistic approach is needed to adequately deal with the crisis.

My government will consider the HIV/AIDS pandemic as a medical crisis, economic crisis, political crisis, and social crisis. This implies that there must be a holistic approach to the problem because there is a correlation between poverty and difficulties in dealing with the crisis. Specifically, the following will be achieved:

- provision of free antiretroviral drugs to the poor, and financially and economically

empowering others to be able to buy anti-retroviral drugs and to have good diets;

- special attention to the distribution of free antiretroviral drugs and [the] encourage-[ment of] voluntary testing in order to prolong and preserve the lives of infected Malawians; and
- reducing the morbidity and mortality, particularly among the most vulnerable groups, through the implementation of the Essential Health Package and other national plans and programmes. This package will be delivered free of charge at the point of delivery for those who cannot afford to pay.

Another challenge facing us is to ensure that people in rural communities, especially women, children, the elderly, and those with physical disabilities, do not have to travel long distances to a hospital or clinic, which must be adequately staffed and well equipped to meet the basic health care needs.

In addition to HIV/AIDS, there is also the battle against readily preventable diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, polio, syphilis, gonorrhoea, measles, whooping cough, and diarrhoea. Our approach will be to guarantee the provision of universal health under the Millennium Development Goals and to improve the access of the rural and urban poor to basic health facilities.

## THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

With regard to people with physical and other disabilities, my government will adopt new programmes that fully address the problem arising from the fact that over one million people with some form of disability in our country are deprived of the right to fully participate in the social and economic development of our country. They will be given new windows of opportunity to fully participate in the economic and social transformation of our country.

People with disabilities have the right to benefit from economic growth and prosperity. My government shall enforce measures in all govern-

ment institutions to remove all forms of discrimination against people with disabilities. There shall be unimpeded access to job opportunities, promotions, and appointments to high positions. They shall also have equal access to business and personal loans.

People with disabilities shall be assisted in procuring hearing aids and sign language services, Braille materials, and other such devices as will make them perform efficiently in school or at work. We shall also introduce special sports for them.

My government shall ensure that all public buildings and public transport services shall be fitted with appropriate ramps and other such devices that will enable people with disabilities to enter and exit such buildings and transport vehicles with ease and comfort.

We shall also encourage similar modifications and facilities in privately owned buildings and commercial vehicles.

## STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY

My government will continue to recognise the role of civil society in ensuring good governance. Since the advent of multiparty democracy, the UDF government, under the leadership of Dr. Bakili Muluzi, has been extremely successful in consolidating democracy in our country.

We shall continue to guarantee freedom of the press and of expression, and that there will be no closures of media organizations. We recognise that human rights, the rule of law, and other fundamental freedoms are the bedrock of good governance. Similarly, the protection of the rights of every citizen to participate in the democratic transition and in the economic growth and development of our country shall be guaranteed.

My government will also ensure that all people in Malawi, regardless of their financial or social status, have unimpeded access to justice that is timely and fair. Nobody will be above the law.

I plan to convene a constitutional review conference later in the year to draw up a new Constitution that takes [into] account the developments during the past ten years.

## SECURITY, STABILITY, AND PEACE

Security, peace, and political stability are the bedrock of democracy and development. My government will, therefore, ensure adequate security and safety of all people in Malawi, their homes, their business premises, and their investments. We shall not allow crime and violence to destabilise our transition to democracy.

Specifically, we shall:

- recruit more police officers and provide adequate fleets of vehicles and communication equipment to enhance mobility and the tracking of criminals;
- construct more police units, especially in the remote rural areas;
- intensify training with emphasis on investigation capabilities and the maintenance of law and order; and
- provide more police vehicles and communication equipment for highway patrols [and] residential patrols, and promote community policing.

In addition, the government will introduce new laws aimed at controlling the possession of illegal firearms to clamp down on armed robberies, car thefts, and domestic and political violence.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

I now turn to international relations. Malawi's foreign policy has always been based on developing and strengthening our relations with our neighbours in particular and the international community in general. In that regard, Malawi has always subscribed to the ideals of the United Nations, the African Union, and regional economic groups such as COMESA and SADC.

I am also determined to make Malawi a better partner in these regional and international organisations. Malawi will also effectively participate in the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations.

## ONE MALAWI, ONE DESTINY

Before concluding my statement, I wish to emphasise the need for unity in our country. We have to believe in one destiny. I have outlined some of the top priorities that I believe can pull Malawi out of poverty. I have also charted the new road map to macroeconomic growth, poverty reduction, and prosperity for our country.

As the new head of state and government, I see my task as that of leading the people to prosperity through consolidating and strengthening the institutions for democracy and sound political and economic governance. I see my role as that of leading and guiding our people regardless of race, colour, tribe, region, political belief, or religion so that together we can forge ahead to a better future.

I am inspired by the assurances that the people of Malawi are ready to accept new political leadership and new directions for our economy and that Malawians are willing to work hard to attain prosperity and to make life better.

I must emphasise that the road to prosperity demands our unequivocal commitment to work hard, much harder in order to realise our common vision. Our success will depend upon our ability as a nation to develop our capacity to kick-start economic growth, turn things around, create new wealth, and bring about prosperity.

As we move towards one destiny, a consensus has emerged that Malawi will not be developed by foreigners. We, the Malawians, must take full ownership of our economy. We alone must develop our country. We alone must pull ourselves out of poverty. Our future is in our hands.

I assure the people of Malawi that I will use the mandate given to me to transform our economy from being a predominantly importing and consuming country to being a predominantly producing and exporting country, and to lead them to prosperity.

I therefore pledge to unite the people of Malawi, regardless of tribe, race, colour, religion or creed, political belief or affiliation so that together we can build the kind of Malawi we want for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren. I pledge to provide sound political and

economic leadership, and to work with all Malawians, including those in the opposition, in a spirit of political tolerance, understanding, and reconciliation, thereby consolidating peace, harmony, security, and stability as the basis for [the] prosperity of our country.

Let me once again thank Your Excellencies, the heads of state and government, the representatives of friendly countries, and the ambassadors and high commissioners accredited to Malawi for finding the time to be with us.

To my dear brother and friend Dr. Bakili Muluzi, I am eternally indebted to you for giving me the rare and unique opportunity to step in[to] your shoes to serve the Malawi nation.

My gratitude also goes to His Lordship the Chief Justice, for the excellent conduct of this function. Let me also thank the Inauguration Committee and all institutions and individuals that have contributed to the success of this inauguration ceremony.

To all the people of Malawi, I say thank you for the trust and confidence you have [placed in] me by electing me to this high office of president of the Republic of Malawi. I pledge to serve you with the highest level of dedication and integrity.

To the opposition and some members of the clergy, I am mindful of the fact that the campaign was sometimes hostile, cruel, brutal, and unfair. But let us now bury the hatchet and move forward to the future as one nation and one people. I therefore offer you my hand [in] friendship, and I assure you that I am ready to work with you to transform our country to prosperity.

The past is for us to learn from. The present is for us to manage. The future is for us to change.

I therefore find it more befitting to end my statement by sharing with you the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;  
Where there is hatred, let me sow peace;  
Where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope;  
Where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.

I thank you, and God bless you all.