

## LAND TALKING POINTS by Hon. Werani Chilenga

- Land is a key resource as all developments happen on land and this is undebatable,
- At the same time, we know that the population is growing and yet Malawi's land size remains the same leading to increasing landlessness, and this doesn't seem to have any solution any time soon.
- Smallholder farmers comprise the bulk of Malawi's farming population, yet remain poorer and poorer, and the trend is far from reducing
- These smallholder farmers use customary land for the farming activities which is largely acquired and owned through inheritance which has in some cases causes land conflicts and there is some notable unfairness in some areas. And worse still the majority of smallholder farmers own less than 0.5 ha of land per household.
- With small landholding size, and growing population, the citizenry are resolving to creating new land by farming in protected areas and other fragile areas, leading to further environmental degradation and exacerbating poverty, it's a vicious cycle
- Worse still, we have seen that the little land available is being grabbed and owned by non-Malawians which poses a huge threat to agricultural transformation. At the same time, the locals are denied to opportunities to own bigger lands because of the environments that are not conducive, such as credits, hence most commercial agriculture is done by few.
- We also appreciate the efforts by government in promoting smallholder farmers through FISP and other programmes, however there is a lot that needs to be done
- The only solution to agricultural development or completely transforming it is ensuring security of land tenure for smallholder farmers, since they form the bulk of Malawi's population, at the same time their land is poorly managed and distributed leading to compromised agricultural outputs and at the same time land degradation contributing to loss in natural resources

With all these challenges and also the potential of land in agricultural development and transformation

- More consideration is needed for a farming system that is conducive and affordable to smallholder farmers which needs research and support.
- Research and investment should be made towards low input cost technologies and practices that are specific to specific locations.
- Where possible, small parcels can be consolidated in sizes that are meaningful for tangible agricultural investments. In doing so, caution should be exercised to avoid exploitation of farmers by external influences.
- With the growing interests of investments on land, there is need to ensure that our laws protect and safeguard land ownership by Malawians.