

**REMARKS MADE BY THE FOUNDATION FOR A SMOKE FREE WORLD-
AGRICULTURE TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE COUNTRY DIRECTOR, DR. CANDIDA
NAKHUMWA, AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE MALAWI ANNUAL AGRICULTURE
POLICY CONFERENCE.**

1ST JUNE 2021, LILONGWE, MALAWI

The Director of Ceremonies

The Guest of Honor, Right Honorable Dr. Saulos Klaus Chilima Vice President of the Republic of Malawi and Minister of Economic Planning, Development and Public Sector Reforms

Hon. Lobin Lowe, MP, Minister of Agriculture,

Hon. Sosten Gwengwe, MP, Minister of Trade,

Hon. Kezzie Kasambala Msuku, MP, Minister of Lands

PS in the Ministry of Agriculture, Madam Erica Maganga

PS in the Ministry of Economic Planning, Development and Public Sector Reforms,
Dr. Winford Masanjala

The Chairperson for the National Planning Commission, Prof. Richard Mkandawire

The Principal Investigator for the Policy Program, Prof. Thomas Jayne

Chairperson of the Donor Committee on Agriculture and Food Security, Madam
Helle Biseth

Chairpersons of Parliamentary Committees on Agriculture; Trade and Natural
Resources

Distinguished Keynote Address Speaker, Prof. Ron Mangani; Conference Presenters
and Panelists

Representatives of Farmer Organizations, Private Sector and Civil Society
Organizations Present

All Directors from various Government Ministries here present

All Captains of Industry

Invited Guests, Members of the Press

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning.

I feel greatly honored to be part of this official launch of the Malawi Annual Agriculture Policy Conference, an important platform that will enable us as stakeholders to deliberate on topical policy issues and map pathways to move from research to implementation of critical policies and strategies that will drive transformation of the agricultural sector. In a special way let me thank you, our Guest of Honor for accepting to grace this occasion amidst your busy schedules. This demonstrates your Government's commitment to agricultural transformation in Malawi.

Guest of Honor, Ladies and Gentlemen

As a country that heavily depends on agriculture, we need to diversify both our food and export base. We have witnessed the value of our tobacco sales dwindling year on year. Tobacco revenues have declined from around US\$ 400 million per year in the 1990s to under US\$200 million in 2020. This points to the need to diversify our export base. Similarly, the need to diversify our food base beyond maize is evident. Yet we have not done enough to facilitate change. We no longer have the luxury of time and urgently need to diversify, a task which calls upon all of us to participate.

Guest of Honor, Ladies and Gentlemen

One key thing as we seek to diversify and transform the agriculture sector, we need to draw some lessons from the tobacco sector, whose success was made. There were deliberate policies and strategies around it. This included policies that supported investments in research, extension, markets, financing, and farmer organization, among others. What this means is that at that point we had capability

to design, strategize and execute. And that is what we need as we seek to identify potential alternatives and transform the sector.

Let me commend government for finalizing several policies, strategies, and bills that are critical in driving transformation such as the Fertilizer Policy, Seed Policy and the Medicinal and Industrial Hemp Act. We hope that government will expedite work on finalizing the other instrumental policies and legislative frameworks and support implementation of the same with the requisite funding and implementation mechanisms. We also hope that government will desist from policy reversals and inconsistency and strive to provide a predictable and conducive policy environment that will encourage private sector investments in the agriculture sector.

Guest of Honor, Ladies and Gentlemen

The Foundation for a Smoke Free World's Agricultural Transformation Initiative remains committed to supporting Agricultural Transformation efforts in Malawi. I am pleased to indicate that to-date, the Foundation has made substantial investments aimed at supporting inclusive growth in the agricultural sector. Among others, this includes the establishment of the MWAPATA Institute, which aims at supporting targeted policy reforms; establishment of the Centre for Agricultural Transformation which is focusing on identification of alternatives to tobacco (including crops, livestock and aquaculture) and investments in Science, Technology, and Innovation to enhance productivity and production; as well as business incubation and commercialization; and finally, investments in human capital development through supporting scholars and researchers that will make

meaningful contributions towards transformation. Let me also take this opportunity to extend the strongest commitment from the President of the Foundation for a Smoke Free World, Dr. Derek Yach, to supporting the government's clear vision of a more prosperous and healthy future less dependent on tobacco and his personal commitment to working closely with all key players who share this vision.

Today, as we launch this annual agricultural policy conference, we have an opportunity to interrogate our policies; whether they are bold enough to lead us to our Vision of becoming an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation as stipulated in the Malawi 2063 Vision. We acknowledge that attainment of this Vision will take political will; hard work; innovation; deep and wide engagement of the young and old; empowered and fully involved men and women, and exploitation of the best of 21st Century science, technology, and innovation and partnerships. We are delighted to be part of this journey.

Guest of Honor, Ladies and Gentlemen

As I conclude, let me once again thank you for making time to come and officially launch this annual policy conference. Let me also thank the organizing team for such an event and call upon all of us to join hands as we seek to transform the agriculture sector in Malawi.

I thank you all your attention.