



**REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**THE MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY  
HONOURABLE SIMPLEX CHITHYOLA, MP.,**

**AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF  
THE 2023 MALAWI AGRICULTURAL  
PRODUCTIVITY AND COMMERCIALIZATION  
CONFERENCE**

**BICC, 30<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST, 2023**

**All Cabinet Ministers Present;**

**Secretary for Trade and Industry, Ms. Christina Zakeyo;**

**Principal Secretary (Technical Services), Dr. Medrina Mloza-Banda**

**The Director General for the National Planning Commission (NPC); Dr. Thomas Munthali;**

**The Executive Director for MwAPATA Institute; Mr. William Chadza;**

**Your Worship the Mayor of Lilongwe City and All Councillors here present;**

**The President, Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA); Dr. Agnes Kalibata;**

**The Vice President for Agriculture, Human and Social Development of the African**

**Development Bank Group (AfDB);**

**Ms. Beth Dunford;**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**

**All Senior Government Officials;**

**Distinguished Exhibitors Including our  
Special Farmers and Farmer Organizations  
and Fair Patrons;**

**Members of the Press;**

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and  
Gentlemen;**

Good morning and welcome to the grand inauguration of the 2023 Malawi Productivity and Commercialization Conference. It is with immense pride and pleasure that I stand before you today as we gather to explore the theme of ***"Diversified Agricultural Value Chains for Improved Trade Balances and Foreign Currency Reserves."*** This conference is a

testament to our shared commitment to advancing the agricultural sector's pivotal role of driving economic growth and stability.

Commencing with the foundation laid during the previous Agricultural Productivity and Commercialization Conference, which was convened in this very room last year in June. Let me emphasize here that His Excellence the State President Dr. Lazarus McCathy Chakwera's intention is to ensure that these conferences evolve beyond mere talk shows, translating into meaningful endeavours that foster tangible advancements in both agricultural productivity and commercialization – the foundational pillar of Malawi 2063.

Following the conclusion of the last conference, the Ministry of Agriculture was entrusted by His Excellence the State President: To spearhead the transformation of agriculture in Malawi. I am encouraged to observe the fruits of those

discussions today. From the reports I have received, there are a number of policies being implemented aimed at encouraging investments in vital agricultural value chains.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**, this year's conference theme, *"Diversified Agricultural Value Chains for Improved Trade Balances and Foreign Currency Reserves,"* resonates deeply not only with me but also with all Malawians. We are a nation deeply intertwined with agriculture, and as we seek to augment our foreign currency reserves, it is paramount that we turn to agriculture as our primary source of foreign exchange, complementing this with mining and tourism. Our shared pursuit must focus on shifting from subsistence agriculture to a thriving commercial landscape. This journey necessitates our collective efforts.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and**

**Gentlemen**, external and domestic shocks, such as the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, recurring tropical storms, and macroeconomic imbalances, have cast shadows on Malawi's aspiration to transform into a self-reliant, industrialized, and prosperous nation by 2063. Despite these challenges, I urge you all to unite and devise solutions that will fortify our trade balances and rejuvenate foreign currency reserves. This transition mandates a shift from individual contributions to cooperative teamwork.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**, through strategic partnerships, information exchange, and resource synergy, My Ministry of Trade and Industry, will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, and indeed all other relevant stakeholders in the quest to transform and commercialize agriculture in this country,

In my role as the Minister of Trade, I visualize a scenario where these ministries harmoniously come together. – where the fruits of our land are not merely harvested, but elevated to global prominence through innovative value addition and strategic trade alliances. Imagine Malawian produce gracing international markets, coveted for its quality and authenticity, while our local entrepreneurs thrive amidst a vibrant domestic trade landscape.

This collaboration is the embodiment of the Malawi 2063 spirit – a collective peak towards a prosperous future. By joining forces, the Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture together with all stakeholders shall script a narrative of agricultural excellence and economic empowerment, leaving a lasting impact on our nation's path towards achieving greatness.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,** the path to achieving our development goals is underscored by the importance of unity. We must eliminate the concept of relying on a single force to effect change. Rather, transformation will be propelled by the fruition of collective efforts. As we gather here, fostering a synergy of ideas and policies in the agricultural sector, it is imperative that each one of us, from smallholder farmers to policymakers, takes an active role in propelling diversified agricultural production towards trade balance enhancement and foreign currency accrual. This transformation is a multi-faceted effort.

Farmers must diligently cultivate high-quality produce, processors must strive to create globally competitive products, and policymakers must foster an enabling environment that facilitates production and



export. This relationship requires harmonic teamwork, as any disruption in the chain can disrupt the entire process. Our mutual dedication will pivot the axis of our agricultural systems towards commercial orientation.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**, the First Ten Year Implementation Plan (MIP-1) of MW2063 has set out specific actions, timelines, and indicators for the effective contribution of the agriculture sector to Malawi's quest of graduating into a middle-income economy and achieving most of the Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030. Some of these actions and interventions include agricultural diversification into the production of higher-value crops and value addition of export products; creating an enabling business environment in agriculture; establishing structured markets for agricultural products; and improved health and nutrition.

Furthermore, our integration into the African Continental Free Trade Area and the subsequent negotiation of bilateral trade agreements has unlocked access to markets across the continent. The demand for our agricultural products is vast, yet challenges in quality and volume impede our capacity to meet this demand. I implore each of you here today to collectively address these challenges, enabling us to fully harness the potential of trade agreements like the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**, as you can see, policy direction or investment opportunities or public pronouncements regarding agricultural productivity and commercialization have been there, what has been lacking was implementation. The mega-farms initiative is one of such pronouncements. Having toured the pavilions and exhibitions, I am convinced

that the Ministry is moving in the right direction to make sure there is implementation of policies and pronouncements. Let us, therefore, continue in this manner and indeed with this spirit. Let me also mention here that I have noted that the Ministry of Agriculture had put out a call for interested stakeholders who would want to venture into mega farming, and a lot of progress has been made. I am also happy to see that the private sector has not remained silent and it has proceeded to produce enough for foreign markets. However, we could do more as a nation.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**, as I conclude, let me take this opportunity to thank all of you that have been supporting implementation of the identified activities under Pillar 1 of the Malawi 2063. Allow me to mention a few institutions and partners in this regard, a very big thank you to

the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World, Agriculture Transformation Initiative (ATI), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Bank through AGCOM project and other initiatives, the African Development Bank (ADB), and other development partners for their untiring support. Thank you for your continued support in the agricultural sector.

I would also like to acknowledge the Greenbelt Authority(GBA), OXFAM, the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources(LUANAR), NASFAM, Farm Radio Trust, Farmers Union of Malawi (FUM), and African Institute for Corporate Citizenship (AICC) for the financial support towards this conference. Allow me also to acknowledge the good job that has been done by the organizing committee.

**Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**, as I am winding up my speech, let me remind all of you that this conference provides a very good platform for dialogue, collaboration, and learning. It is a forum where ideas will flourish, partnerships will be forged, and strategies will be formulated. I urge all of you, esteemed participants, to actively engage, share your insights, and contribute to the collective vision that will shape our agricultural landscape.

With these remarks, **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**, I declare the 2023 Malawi Agricultural Productivity and Commercialization Conference officially open.

**Thank you for your attention.**

**God bless Malawi!!**