



REPUBLIC OF MALAWI



**STATEMENT BY HON. PATRICIA KALIATI M.P., MINISTER OF  
GENDER, CHILDREN, DISABILITY AND SOCIAL WELFARE OF  
THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI AT THE 62<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE  
CEDAW COMMITTEE UPON THE CONSIDERATION OF THE  
SEVENTH PERIODIC REPORT OF MALAWI.**

**Chairperson,**

I am greatly honoured and privileged to lead the Malawi delegation to the 62<sup>ND</sup> Session of the CEDAW Committee. The Government of Malawi is pleased and grateful to have its 7<sup>th</sup> periodic CEDAW Report reviewed and considered by the committee.

The Government of Malawi has placed women's rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women at the centre of its development agenda. Malawi recognizes that the achievement of a meaningful and equitable social and economic development of the country, hinges on effective mainstreaming of gender and progressive achievement of women empowerment. It is for this reason that Malawi is pleased to present and discuss its 7<sup>th</sup> Report with your esteemed committee.

**Chairperson,**

Malawi's 7<sup>th</sup> Periodic report and the subsequent report on the responses to the list of issues raised by the committee provided considerable details to the implementation status and progress of the CEDAW provisions. My statement therefore is largely providing

additional details on the progress related to the implementation of CEDAW provisions.

In order to achieve meaningful gender equality, the Government of Malawi continues to strengthen its legal framework. In addition to the Gender Equality Act, 2013, which was stated in the report, Malawi has enacted two significant gender related legislations namely: the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act, 2015 and the Trafficking in Persons Act, 2015. The two pieces of legislations offer another opportunity to better protect and promote the rights of women in Malawi. It is pleasing to note that in April, 2015, the President assented to the two laws and they were operationalised on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 2015 and 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2015 respectively. The commencement dates have also been communicated to all courts and other relevant institutions. The Government is currently developing regulations and guidelines for the effective enforcement and implementation of the gender related laws.

I am also pleased to report that Government has completed the technical review of the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act which will be considered by

Cabinet soon. Land related laws will also be retaken back to the November 2015 Parliament for enactment. The laws will address the inequalities based on sex, gender and marital status; and enhance social protection, development and safeguard the ownership and distribution.

The dissemination processes of the gender related laws are ongoing. My Ministry is spearheading the trainings and orientations of the media, chiefs, front line government workers and the general population.

Further, Malawi has developed user friendly versions of the gender related laws for use by duty bearers and the public namely: Gender Equality; Deceased Estates (Wills, Inheritance and Protection); and Prevention of Domestic Violence Acts. The laws have also been translated into two local languages namely Chewa and Tumbuka.

**Chairperson,**

The Government of Malawi, through my Ministry, has embarked on capacity building of all the stakeholders

using the recently revised Gender Equality Training Manual. In view of the discrimination challenges women face, my Ministry in collaboration with the Human Rights Commission of Malawi has facilitated the development of the Implementation Plan for Gender Equality Act. The Implementation Plan, regulations and guidelines will enhance the enforcement of the Gender Equality Act.

### **Chairperson**

Recently, Malawi reported that the National Gender Policy was under review. I am pleased to report that Cabinet approved not only the National Gender Policy but also the National Social Welfare Policy in September and October, 2015 respectively. The Community Development, the Older Persons and the Early Childhood Development Policies are at cabinet stage.

The aim of the National Gender Policy is to guide all the gender mainstreaming, budgeting, auditing and women empowerment efforts in the development processes and enhance the participation of women, men, girls and boys for sustainable and equitable development of the country. What is interesting to note is that the policy

has been well aligned with the newly enacted laws and dissemination plan of the same is at an advanced stage. The National Social Welfare Policy will complement the National Gender Policy by strengthening the protecting and rehabilitation of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

### **Chairperson**

Allow me to report that my Ministry has oriented 13 out of 28 district councils on the newly enacted Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act. My Ministry will continue to orient magistrates, prosecuting, social welfare, child protection, community development, courts and other officers to ensure that they have the capacity to manage cases of women's rights violations with a lot of sensitivity and understanding.

### **Chairperson,**

In order to address gender based violence, the Government has taken different strides to uproot the underlying causes. My Ministry launched a Study Report on *Violence Against Children and Young Women in Malawi* with its corresponding Response Plan in July

2015. In August 2015, my Ministry disseminated all gender based plans namely: *Gender Based Violence National Plan of Action; Violence Against Children and Young Women in Malawi and its corresponding Response Plan; National Plan of Action for Vulnerable Children*. The purpose of the dissemination is to integrate in all the district council plans gender equality, women rights and empowerment; and the protection of children from violence activities. My Ministry will continue to monitor the implementation of the District Development Plans.

### **Chairperson**

My Ministry has adopted the recommendation by the Committee to have disaggregated data on Gender Based Violence by strengthening the working relationship with the Malawi Police Service and the community structures for the effective implementation of Gender Based Violence Information Management System. It is anticipated that the Information Management System will be vital in the planning and designing of future gender related programmes.

## **Chairperson**

The Government has built the capacity on gender and empowerment of women by recruiting a lawyer who provides legal counsel, handles and coordinate gender based violence cases to improve access to justice by all women and girls. Further, my Ministry in collaboration with the Judiciary is implementing mobile prosecution clinics and mobile courts that are supported by implementing partners to GEWE programme. The mobile prosecutions facilitate access to justice to women and other vulnerable groups in hard to reach communities.

## **Chairperson**

In light of the increased poverty that women in both urban and rural areas face, my Ministry in collaboration with Ministries responsible for Industry and Trade; Labour; Lands; Agriculture; Energy; Education; Health; and Finance; and other stakeholders has facilitated the development of Women's Economic Empowerment Implementation Plan. The implementation of the Plan will further address the existing gender stereotypes and ensure vulnerable groups including women benefit from socio-

economic empowerment initiatives. The Government is also implementing social protection programmes like the Social Cash Transfer; Gender Equality and Women Empowerment; Keeping Girls in School; and School Feeding; Community Savings and Investment; and *Mmera Mpoyamba* Programmes.

### **Chairperson**

To address high rates of school drop-outs and the low retention of girls at both primary and secondary levels, the Ministry responsible for Education is coordinating the implementation of the National Girls Education Strategy (NGES 2014 – 2018) to accelerate interventions aimed at strengthening girl's education. The Ministry is also developing an Implementation Plan for Education Act which addresses most of the challenges girls face in schools. The Ministry has strengthened the implementation of the Re-admission Policy aimed at the reintegration of teenage mothers into the formal school system. Over 650,000 girls have under this programme been readmitted back to school using provision of bursaries and accessories at all levels of education.

## **Chairperson,**

Although the Government has registered significant developments in the establishment of a strong legal framework for the gender equality, women empowerment and promotion of women rights, I wish to report that in certain areas the progress is slow. For instance, the women representation in Parliament has gone down from 43 in 2009 to 32 women in 2014. In view of these, my Ministry in collaboration with the civil society organizations, academia and women groups, is working with Electoral Commission to introduce gender neutral political quotas proposed under the Gender Equality Statute Report from the Law Commission. The electoral law review process is also underway.

Despite the challenges of inadequate resources to the gender sector which is exacerbated by inadequate coordination mechanisms, the Government is working with relevant partners to increase the budgetary allocation and identify and place Gender Focal Points in all Ministries, Departments and Agencies within the public sector. In addition, the President of Malawi as one of the eight global **He For She** Champion has requested for tangible deliverables on ending child marriage,

increased women's access to credit and reduce gender based violence.

**Chairperson**

In conclusion, let me thank the CEDAW Committee for providing Malawi the opportunity to present and discuss the report with you.

**I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.**