



REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS

**TAKING STOCK AND ADVANTAGE OF OUR
PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING ECONOMIC
RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE**

by

**HIS EXCELLENCY
DR. LAZARUS McCARTHY CHAKWERA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

during the opening of

**THE 2024/2025 BUDGET MEETING
AT THE FOURTH MEETING IN THE 50TH
SESSION OF PARLIAMENT**

LILONGWE, MALAWI

Friday, 9th February 2024

- **YOUR EXCELLENCY MADAME MONICA CHAKWERA, FIRST LADY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI;**
- **RIGHT HONOURABLE DR. SAULOS KLAUS CHILIMA, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI;**
- **RIGHT HONOURABLE CATHERINE GOTANI HARA, M.P., SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY;**
- **YOUR LORDSHIP HONOURABLE RIZINE MZIKAMANDA, SC, CHIEF JUSTICE;**
- **HONOURABLE DEPUTY SPEAKERS;**
- **HONOURABLE LEADER OF THE HOUSE;**
- **HONOURABLE CABINET MINISTERS AND DEPUTY MINISTERS;**
- **HONOURABLE JUSTICES OF APPEAL AND JUDGES OF THE HIGH COURT;**
- **HONOURABLE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION;**
- **LEADERS OF POLITICAL PARTIES REPRESENTED IN PARLIAMENT;**

- **HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT;**
- **MS COLLEEN ZAMBA, SECRETARY TO THE
PRESIDENT AND CABINET;**
- **SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS;**
- **HER EXCELLENCY DR. NANCY SAUNGWEME,
DEAN OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND HEADS
OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS;**
- **DISTINGUISHED INVITED GUESTS;**
- **LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Madam Speaker,

In this two thousand and twenty fourth year of our Lord, Malawi turns 60. And a Diamond Jubilee is no small milestone for any nation, and as far as I am concerned, it is the latest reminder to all of us that we have no luxury to entertain any lack of seriousness. Therefore as I stand here, I am fully expecting that the discussions to be held in this Fourth Meeting of the 50th Parliamentary Session will be done with the seriousness commensurate with the maturation of our nation.

But for those who might need more incentive to take the business of this House seriously, I submit that another reason we must insist on seriousness in this session is that we gather here at a time when Malawi and her citizens are facing a very serious situation economically. In short, **Madam Speaker**, millions of Malawians are in a state of compounded pain, and that pain deserves to be the chief preoccupation of every person who holds public office, whether elected or not.

Madam Speaker, I say that the pain Malawians are experiencing is compounded, because that pain stems from a combination of no less than three factors that no serious person can ignore or deny. First, it is undeniable, **Madam Speaker**, that some of the pain being felt by Malawians stems from geopolitical factors,

such as the ongoing disruptions to the global supply chain triggered by the war in Eastern Europe and responsible for the sharp rise in the price of critical imports like pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, and fuel, none of which Malawi controls. Secondly, it is undeniable, **Madam Speaker**, that some of the pain being felt by Malawians stems from over twenty years of public policies that have effectively destroyed Malawi's production and manufacturing, leaving too many of our youth without jobs and too few of our goods being exported to generate forex and keep our currency strong, a failed 20 year-long policy I recently ended by making the bold, painful, unpopular, but healthy decision to end the falsification of the exchange rate and start the work of rebuilding it on the foundation of productivity. And thirdly, **Madam Speaker**, it is also undeniable that some of the pain being felt by Malawians stems from the devastation left by the four natural disasters that hit Malawi within a 13 month period, killing thousands, displacing millions, disrupting power supply, washing away homes, flattening entire villages and businesses, dismantling infrastructure, and destroying fields and fields of food crops, which has in turn left millions in need of food relief and which is why everywhere I have gone around the country to hear directly from Malawians themselves over the past six months, they have told me that their greatest threat right now is hunger.

Now, **Madam Speaker**, while the maturing of Malawi in this year of Diamond Jubilee and the compounded pain of Malawians are

enough reason to demand seriousness in the way we conduct our affairs going forward, there is yet one more reason to do so. That reason is that the fundamentals of our economy have been unsound for a long time, stunting the pace of growth and demanding an urgent restructuring of our economy. Take the inflation rates, for example, which reached 34.5 percent this past December, well above the 2023 average of 28.8 percent. Such inflation rates, which have been going up from year to year for some time now, recently triggered by reduced maize production, are a rising temperature and fever signalling the presence of an infection in the bloodstream of our economy.

Madam Speaker, with such clear signs of disease, it is sad that there are economists in this country that think that any small improvement in Malawi's Gross Domestic Product is acceptable, but I have come here to ask members of this House to join me in rejecting this mindset. What Malawians deserve is an economy that is no longer sick, one that is healthy and able to compete, not just one whose fever is slowly going down. I hope no one in this room or this country thinks it is acceptable that between 2022 and 2023, the GDP only grew by 0.6 percent. I hope no one in this room or this country finds it acceptable that our GDP for 2023 was lower than the 3.1 percent the World Economic Outlook Report projected for the global economy in the same period. I hope no one in this room or this country is satisfied to see our economy continue to be at the mercy of the fate of advanced economies, whose economic slowdown and restrictive

monetary policies are currently dragging down global growth. I hope no one in this room or this country accepts that just because the economic growth for the Sub-Saharan region is stuck below its historical average and just because the economic growth projected for Malawi this year is also below that average, we must let that be our fate. I hope no one in this room or this country finds it acceptable that our gross official reserves at the end of the third quarter of 2023 were less than 250 million dollars, equivalent to just under one month of import cover, not when we have thousands of diaspora Malawians generating revenue abroad and not when the international market is in short supply of value chains we can produce in abundance here at home.

So, **Madam Speaker**, my message to the nation today is that even though the pain we are feeling is no fault of anyone here and even though it is similar to the pain being felt across our region and around the world, we must collectively resolve to not let that pain tear us apart or accept that pain as a fate we cannot do anything about. I know that some politicians specialize in selling despair and defeat to Malawians, but I for one am in the business of giving Malawians hope. It is a hope based on the policies we have deployed to rescue our climate-change ravaged economy from total collapse. It is a hope based on the belief that the Malawian people have the energy and resilience to work hard in rebuilding their lost livelihoods. It is a hope based on the dividends and positive strides we are already seeing from our interventions, a

clear sign that the economy is already recovering and that this is the time to take stock of that progress and use it to achieve even greater and faster progress going forward.

For instance, the fact that the country's Human Development Index (HDI) moved up five steps from position 174 to position 169 means recovery is happening and we must take advantage of it and spread it to more people. Similarly, the fact that Malawi made advances in five different Sustainable Development Goals means recovery is happening and we must take advantage of it and spread it to more people. Thirdly, the fact that food inflation has been going down for several weeks and is set to go down further when the harvest is in means that recovery is happening and we must take advantage of it and spread it to more people. Fourthly, the fact that we have stabilized non-food inflation by adopting a tight monetary policy stance of raising the policy rate and the reserve requirement on domestic currency deposits in the wake of last year's devaluation means that recovery is happening and we must take advantage of it and spread it to more people.

Additionally, **Madam Speaker**, the fact that my Administration has brought back fiscal discipline in public finance management and implemented economic reforms to the point of regaining donor confidence and securing investments from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the European Union, and others towards direct budgetary support in the

coming fiscal year means that recovery is happening and we need to take advantage of it and spread it to more people. Chief among the things we must exploit is the support that is rushing back to Malawi following the approval of the Extended Credit Facility by the IMF, including a 70 million Euro grant package from the German Government; a 137 million Dollar grant for budgetary support from the World Bank; another 57 million Dollar grant for Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown (CATDDO) from the World Bank; and another 240 million dollar grant from the World Bank for a Regional Climate Resilience Programme (RCRP), all because the donor community has chosen to give us credit for the reforms we have put in place.

And we are determined to stay the course on reforms, **Madam Speaker**, for even our handling of the debt stock that jumped up by 25 percent following the devaluation will henceforth be subjected to a debt transparency policy that will not only make it mandatory for all money bills to be presented to the Budget and Finance Committee of Parliament before tabling in this August House, but will also require the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs to publish regular reports on public debt status and medium-term debt management strategy aimed at confining foreign debt to concessional debt and grant financing, as well as reviewing domestic debt profiles towards longer maturity periods. Another set of reforms we are determined to do is in the area of revenue collection, including introducing a fairer tax regime; completing our ongoing review of the Value Added Tax Act and

the Taxation Act; establishing an independent Revenue Appeals Tribunal to settle tax disputes between taxpayers and the Malawi Revenue Authority transitioning all revenue collection to a digitized e-payments system, all of which will make ours an investment friendly economy.

And, **Madam Speaker**, while we are on the subject of reforms for taking advantage of the progress we are making in recovering the economy, last quarter I ordered austerity measures to ensure that every agency and department that handles public funds is focused on using those resources on our economic priorities, not on excesses that show a lack of seriousness. As an extension of that order, I have embarked on a wholesale review of parastatals to ensure that those that are productive and profitable are made more efficient and those that just consume and make losses are administered a radical cure. Towards that end, my Administration has already migrated the bank accounts of 22 Regulatory State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and Statutory Bodies from commercial banks to the Reserve Bank of Malawi (RBM), and I will continue with this migration policy to include fully sub-vented organizations and Commercial SOEs. My reason for doing that is simple: the practice over the past twenty years of having Public Bodies deposit their revenues with commercial banks so that Government is made to borrow its own money at high interest rates for the enrichment of a few is a practice that lacks seriousness, and you can go tell whoever created that

system that by the end of this coming fiscal year, I am shutting it down.

Whether anyone likes it or not, inch by inch and layer by layer, we are dismantling every part of this system that was put in place by people who were not serious. This is also why, **Madam Speaker**, when this August House recently asked me to sign a bill designed to take public resources and share them among political parties in Parliament regardless of whether they qualify for public funding as stipulated in Section 40 of the Constitution, I rejected the bill and sent it back because we cannot continue creating systems that show a lack of seriousness. At this point in our nation's development, the only behaviour that shows seriousness is that which helps us focus on our priorities. And when I stood here to deliver a State of the Nation Address on the 12th of May 2021, I made it very clear that our top priorities are food security, job creation, and wealth creation. Similarly, I have said again and again for the past 14 months that the way to achieve food security, job creation, and wealth creation in the shortest time possible is to boost productivity in Agriculture, Tourism, and Mining sectors, or what I have called the ATM Strategy. So, if these are our priorities, then we cannot afford to continue wasting our limited resources on things that are not productive. If these are our priorities, then we must get serious by investing in them more than we invest in partisan politics. If these are our priorities, we must get serious by putting resources into them instead of our personal entitlements. If these are our

priorities, we must get serious by working together to promote them across MDAs instead of engaging in territorialism through institutional turf wars. If these are our priorities, we must get serious by taming our appetite to spend public resources on nonproductive activities and non-productive public sector bodies. If achieving food security, job creation, and wealth creation through Agriculture, Tourism, and Mining is our priority, I said, then this is where we must put our hardest-working and smartest officials, not those who are lazy and complacent.

Madam Speaker, I believe that our concerted effort in promoting and leveraging these priorities holds the promise of greater growth than what the economists are projecting. I believe that if our economy is already in recovery and projected to continue growing incrementally based on the progress our MDAs have made this year when their efforts have not been focused on the ATM Strategy, then there is no reason our economy should not grow exponentially when the efforts of all our MDAs prioritize promoting productivity in Agriculture, Mining, and Tourism for the achievement of food security, job creation, and wealth creation. To give you a sense of what I mean, **Madam Speaker**, let me report to you the progress my Administration has made in various areas to fast-track our achievement of food security, job creation, and wealth creation through the ATM Strategy.

II. REVIEWING WHERE WE ARE ON THE JOURNEY

A. ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY

AGRICULTURE

Madam Speaker, within the Agriculture sector, maize remains the primary traditional source of food security. However, it is now trite that the previous maize production season was challenged by a number of shocks including natural disasters. Cyclone Freddy alone caused significant damage to the crop, particularly in the southern districts of Malawi where approximately 53,000 hectares of maize fields, or 3 percent of the planting area for maize, were affected. The Cyclone also damaged irrigation systems in some districts such as Chikwawa, Blantyre, Zomba and Phalombe. Furthermore, the rise in prices of agricultural inputs worldwide as a result of the war in Ukraine, and the delayed commencement of the subsidy program due to the sharp rise in fertilizer prices, led to low fertilizer use. This compromised production of priority crops in the country, including maize, resulting in a six percent reduction in overall national maize production compared to the 2022/23 season. Despite this reduction, the country still produced enough maize to meet the minimum national maize requirement, but because the available food was not equitably accessible to every household, we have had to intervene in a number of ways to deal with hunger at a household level.

(a) **Access to Maize**

The 2023 Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee (MVAC) estimated that about 4.4 million people would be unable to meet their annual food requirement, representing close to 22 percent of the population. With this estimation, the number of people requiring food support has increased by 15 percent from 3.9 million in 2022. This is the pain Malawians are feeling. In response, my Administration embarked on the lean season response for all the affected people in all the districts, giving each of the affected households a 50kg bag of maize every month, and I expect that members of this House whose constituencies have received this maize will testify that this is true. This intervention, which started four months ago, will run for a period of six months, and it is a supplement to the decision I made to release maize from the Strategic Grain Reserves for price stabilization, and that maize is being sold at an affordable price in a number of areas through ADMARC markets. This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

(b) **Affordable Inputs Programme (AIP)**

Madam Speaker, as you may recall, I also made a commitment to redesign the AIP to make it more targeted on those who are able to achieve food security with it. Consequently, 1.5 million farmers with land holding sizes from 0.25 hectares to 2 hectares were targeted to benefit from the AIP this growing season, with the expectation that they will produce 1,125,000 Metric Tonnes,

thus contributing over 32 percent to our national food grain requirement.

For this growing season, despite a few challenges encountered during the implementation of AIP, including shortage of foreign exchange, the redemption rate of seeds and fertilizers improved by 10 percent compared to the previous one. Our cooperating partners also contributed towards the programme with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) providing 5.1 million Dollars, the Japanese Government providing 5,200 Metric Tonnes of UREA, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia providing 100 Metric Tonnes of fertilizer and 10 Metric Tonnes of hybrid maize. In the coming fiscal year, our mission to refine the AIP will continue, aiming to strengthen beneficiary targeting, eradicating redemption malpractices, and enhancing the timeliness of our interventions. This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

(c) **Mega Farms**

Madam Speaker, everyone now knows that the Mega Farms initiative is a cornerstone of our commitment to enhancing agricultural production and commercialization, and I am happy to report that it has seen significant strides in the past year as we implemented our plans to establish large-scale production units for priority crops. In collaboration with the Malawi Defence Force and Malawi Prisons, my Administration coordinated the production of 373 Metric Tonnes of maize for restocking of our

strategic grain reserves. Similarly, the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) cultivated 103 hectares of maize on Illovo, while Dwangwa Farm produced 700 Metric Tonnes of maize. Additionally, my Administration successfully launched two cooperative-based mega-farms at Linga in Nkhata Bay, with 450 hectares dedicated to rice. We also established a full-time Mega Farm Support Unit at Kanengo here in Lilongwe, which has mobilized 560 farmers managing a combined total of 18,000 hectares for the cultivation of crops like groundnuts and soybeans, under the off-taker agreements with reputable companies such as Pyxus Malawi Ltd and Paramount Group that have links to international markets. This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

(d) **Mechanisation.**

Madam Speaker, improvement in agriculture productivity, as desired under Pillar One of Malawi 2063, demands mechanization of the Agriculture sector. In this respect, my Administration facilitated the establishment of a private sector tractor hiring association with a fleet of more than 134 tractors which can be hired by farmers any time. This initiative, along with the distribution of 16 new tractors and other agricultural equipment to cooperatives, has substantially increased crop production on our Mega Farms. This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

(e) **Irrigation Development**

Madam Speaker, in the wake of Cyclone Freddy's devastation and El Nino weather forecast for the 2023/2024 rain season, my Administration intensified irrigation activities to mitigate the effects of climate change on food security. As a result, the area under irrigation grew by 2 percent during the reporting period. The developments in irrigation resulted in production of 342,000 Metric Tonnes of food crops and 515,000 Metric Tonnes of export crops. And yet we have only scratched the surface, since although total area developed for irrigation has increased from 146,966 hectares to 148,850 hectares in 2023, it is nowhere near the 407,862 hectares of irrigable land available. As such, my Administration will continue to develop irrigation projects to build resilience of the Agriculture sector and sustain production and productivity, and there are exciting prospects for Malawi ahead. For instance, under the Shire Valley Transformation Programme, the first 6 kms of the main Canal has been completed including the coffer dam. In the coming year, my Administration will focus on construction of secondary pipelines for phase 1 and when completed, these will bring water for irrigation to 22,280 hectares.

Another exciting prospect is the Programme for Rural Irrigation Development (PRIDE), through which my Administration plans to develop 8,765 hectares of new schemes and rehabilitate 1,930 hectares of existing schemes, with a total of 10,000 beneficiary households. Construction of Mafinga and Marko Irrigation

Schemes in Chitipa, and Lingoni Irrigation Scheme in Machinga covering 450 hectares was completed, and the schemes are now being utilized in full. Meanwhile, construction of Mlooka and Matoponi solar powered Irrigation Schemes in Zomba is at 95 percent and 90 percent completion respectively, while construction of Wowo Irrigation Scheme in Phalombe is at 90 percent completion. In Karonga, four Irrigation Schemes, namely Wovwe, Hara, Chonanga and Ukanga with a total area of 700 hectares have been rehabilitated and these came in handy for rice and maize production during the dry season. This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Madam Speaker, even with all these interventions to stave off hunger, there have still been millions of families in need of help, low income families for whom the food relief and AIP support was deemed not suitable for various reasons. For these, my Administration continued implementing cushioning interventions, including the Social Cash Transfers Programme (SCTP), the Climate Smart Enhanced Public Works Programme (CS-EPWP), and a Food Security Response programme. Through the SCTP, also known as "Mtukula Pakhomo", my Administration has increased the monthly allocation that beneficiaries receive from 9,000 Kwacha to 19,000 Kwacha, and this is already being considered for an upward revision. But in keeping with my commitment to serve all Malawians, my Administration is

currently sending this support to 290,979 households in all 28 districts of the country, with a plan to increase the coverage from 10 percent of the population to 15 percent.

I am aware, **Madam Speaker**, that income insecurity is also ravaging some households in urban and peri-urban areas, especially in those parts hit by climate change events. This is why my Administration has set up the Price Shock Urban Emergency Cash Transfer Programme, which will target 105,000 households in Zomba, Blantyre, Mzuzu, and Lilongwe, with beneficiaries receiving a total of 150,000 Kwacha over three months. Similarly, in the districts of Blantyre, Thyolo, Phalombe, Chiradzulu, Mulanje, Nsanje, Chikwawa, and Balaka, my Administration is implementing the Tropical Cyclone Freddy Recovery Programme, targeting 31,955 households that will each receive a total of 150,000 Kwacha over three months. As for the Climate-Smart Enhanced Public Works Programme, which is a conditional cash transfer program that provides a wage to beneficiaries in all 28 districts in exchange for their work on various projects such as land resource conservation, afforestation, and forest regeneration, 394,927 households have already been enrolled, thus creating jobs for hundreds of thousands, and soon we will extend this program to City Councils to support the urban poor. This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

DEFENCE

Madam Speaker, although our military remains strong and disciplined, and steps to modernize its operations are ongoing so that our men and women in uniform remain the best in peacekeeping missions like the one in the Democratic Republic of Congo, today I am delighted to inform you that even the Malawi Defence Force has embraced our prioritization of food security. To begin with, the MDF has established Mega-Farms in Mchinji and Mzimba districts to produce crops such as maize, soybeans, and livestock, projects which are also creating job opportunities for youths through the National Youth Service that I launched several months ago. Secondly, this past year the military also contributed to our food security agenda supporting other law enforcement agencies in preventing the illegal export of our maize and legumes. This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

Now, **Madam Speaker,** allow me to report on the progress we are making in our recovery through our focus on our second priority, namely achieving wealth creation.

B. ACHIEVING WEALTH CREATION

AGRICULTURE

Madam Speaker, if we are going to create wealth for Malawians in the shortest possible time, the answer is agricultural commercialization, which is why three and a half months ago, I launched the second phase of the Agricultural Commercialization (AGCOM) Project in partnership with the World Bank. So far, 372 Productive Alliances have been established throughout the country, supporting more than 30 agriculture value chains, most of which are export commodities and also for import substitution. The key value chains being supported are Dairy, Soybeans, Rice, Honey, Coffee and Sugar Cane. The programme is supporting over 350,000 people from 75,000 households, of which 59 percent are female and 27 percent are youth, a key milestone in our commitment to economically empower women and youth. Even on the job creation front, this project alone has created a total of 12,500 jobs. This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

Madam Speaker, AGCOM Project has also been a great source of support for our Mega Farms Initiative. The Project financed KAMA Cooperative Mega Farm with 5.3 billion Kwacha, which was used to install full irrigation systems, procure tractors, construct cane shade, procure sugar cane seed and other loose farm tools, with a projection that output will increase five-fold from 19 million litres of ethanol produced from cane molasses to over 96 million litres of ethanol, by-producing 200,000 bags of

organic fertilizer in the process, generating 2 Megawatts of electricity, and creating over 800 jobs in the process.

Madam Speaker, my Administration also collaborated with Pyxus Ltd in embarking on a wheat seed multiplication programme at Mpale Estate in Dowa. This programme is set to revolutionize wheat production on 15,000 hectares of land in the 2024/25 farming season, thus marking a significant milestone in our agricultural diversification and wealth creation efforts. My Administration has further mobilized 35 billion Kwacha, approximately 23 million Dollars, to provide low interest loans to farmers and agriculture commodity processors for their wealth creation efforts. These funds are accessible through the Malawi Agriculture and Industrial Investment Corporation (MAIIC) and the National Economic Empowerment Fund (NEEF), because we are serious about giving Mega Farmers the resources they need to build wealth. **Madam Speaker,** before I move on to how we focused on wealth creation in other sectors beyond agriculture, let us not forget that in our society, livestock is wealth, and my Administration has started constructing two state-of-the-art livestock service centres in Chikwawa and Lilongwe as a mechanism for implementing our Commercial Agriculture and Export Strategy. And if anyone thinks that our Export Strategy is not ticking, you can ask the Government of India and you will learn that exports from Malawi to India have increased 10-fold under my Administration. This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

MINING

In Mining, we recognized early in my Administration that there can be no wealth creation from our bounty of minerals without organizing the sector to end decades of exploitation and negligence. Ever since I announced the reforms I was going to effect in this sector three years ago, we have faced resistance, roadblocks, and rebellion. But we have prevailed. I am therefore happy to report, **Madam Speaker**, that during the year gone by, we have set up the institutional framework for bringing sanity to and creating wealth from our Mining sector. First, we repealed the Mines and Minerals Act and replaced it with a new one so that the law protects the interests of Malawians in all mining activities. Second, we have developed the organizational structure for a Mining Regulatory Authority that we will begin building once the new Act has been duly gazetted. Third, we established a National Mining Company that belongs to the Malawian people, with a mandate to catalyse private sector development, encourage joint ventures, act as a state equity partner, undertake in-depth exploration, and most importantly, maximize revenue generation and social benefits to Malawians. Fourth, we have created the Malawi Development Cooperation Holdings Limited, through which Malawi will safeguard its interests in its national treasures, and the new Mining Company has been incorporated as a subsidiary of this larger conglomerate. Fifth, in the past I announced here that we would

construct a state-of-the-art Mineral Laboratory Complex for processing mineral samples, and today I am happy to report that this crucial facility has been completed.

Madam Speaker, at the same time that we have been reorganizing the Mining sector, we have been reviewing the existing mining agreements themselves, because some of the deals that have been negotiated in the past show a lack of seriousness. As a result of this effort, my Administration has successfully negotiated and signed a Mining Development Agreement for the mining of niobium at Kanyika in Mzimba district, and we are in the course of renegotiating other MDAs, including those with Lotus Resources Limited for the Kayerekera Mine, and Mkango Resources Limited for Rare Earth Project at Songwe Hill in Phalombe. Malawians may also wish to know that an investor is all set to start mining works at Kangankunde Hill, which is estimated to have 261 million Tonnes of rare earth worth billions and billions of Dollars.

Notwithstanding these big mining companies, our wealth creation agenda demands that we make the sector accessible for Artisanal and Small-Scale Miners (ASM). This is why my Administration has trained 134 ASM members across various regions on mineral tenement, acquisition, and cooperative management. Additionally, 296 ASM participants from 12 mining groups have also undergone training on Safety, Health, and Sustainable Mining Practices, and we are currently facilitating

the registration of four cooperatives, with a cumulative total of 17 cooperatives registered to date.

Madam Speaker, my progress report on wealth creation efforts in mining would not be complete if I omitted the progress on the Kasiya Rutile Project. As I speak, Sovereign Metals Limited and Rio Tinto have entered into a partnership, and now the project is undergoing a Definitive Feasibility Study and an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment, which mark a crucial step in advancing the Kasiya Rutile-Graphite Project in Malawi. When all these operations begin to yield a harvest, it will be a game changer for Malawi not only economically, but also geopolitically, for we have every reason to expect that we will become less dependent on outsiders for any resources to build our roads, our hospitals, our bridges, our schools, our universities, our airports, and more. The work we have done this year to restructure the sector is great progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

TOURISM

Madam Speaker, while Tourism is still Malawi's third largest source of foreign exchange after tobacco and tea, I remain convinced that this sector continues to perform below its true potential. And the obstacles that stand in the way of our full potential are mostly in other sectors, and this is why this past year we began to address the factors in other sectors that hold

our Tourism sector back. Chief among these factors is accessibility of our country, and I am pleased to report that not only have we increased the number of airlines traveling to Malawi and are in the process of designing a Malawi Flight Plan for increased air access, but we have also concluded three Bilateral Air Service Agreements with Mozambique, Uganda, and Kuwait to introduce direct flights into Malawi, while talks with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritius, and Nigeria to do the same are in progress.

Even more exciting is the fact that just this week, my Administration has gazetted the visa waiver program I announced here last year, exempting travellers from 79 countries and territories from paying visa fees. And I expect our Ministry of Foreign Affairs to use this waiver to immediately begin negotiating with those countries and territories for more friendly visa terms for Malawians traveling there as a way of increasing our access to international markets for wealth creation.

Another key ingredient for wealth creation through Tourism is the development of the needed infrastructure and services. And it is in pursuit of this goal that we have completed the acquisition of 52.7 hectares of beach land in T/A Maganga, Salima, for the Salima Integrated Hotel and Resort, and we have already invited private sector players to invest in the development of facilities and services through a Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement. We have also continued to engage with tourism

enterprises and hospitality industry players to offer incentives for the development of special packages for Malawians to boost local tourism as part of efforts to implement the Domestic Tourism Marketing Strategy.

As a result of all these efforts, international arrivals have increased by about 64 percent from 2021, reaching approximately 708,000 in 2022, and we expect a tourism boom following the interventions we have put in place more recently. But as we prepare for that boom, we must get serious about understanding that tourism is an enterprise that involves every citizen as a marketer for the country, and so political and community leaders have a responsibility to lead by example in how they speak about Malawi to outsiders or on international platforms. Otherwise, we are making great progress in this area, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

FINANCE

Madam Speaker, I cannot speak about wealth creation efforts without talking about our use of the finances Malawians entrust to us. I mentioned earlier that we have established the Malawi Development Corporation Holding Limited (MDCHL) to spearhead investment in strategic sectors of the economy, because we want the resources of Malawians to be used for production and development that yield exponential returns. One mechanism we have employed for doing that is improving access

to finance for Micro Small and Medium sized Enterprises (MSMEs) through initiatives such as the Financial Inclusion and Entrepreneurship Scaling (FInES) project, NEEF, and Agriculture Commercialization (AGCOM) Project. In the 2023/2024 financial year, NEEF alone disbursed a total of 34.7 billion Kwacha in loans to 107,505 MSMEs, while 51 billion Kwacha has been disbursed to 43,887 MSMEs through the FInES project. These finances are creating wealth for Malawians as we speak, and it is the kind of progress we will build on to keep our recovery going.

ENERGY

Madam Speaker, where wealth creation is concerned, energy generation for industry and economic operations is indispensable. The bottom line is that any Government that cannot fix blackouts is bad for the economy. And within two years in office, my Administration ended blackouts, and when Tropical Storm Ana damaged Kapichira Power Plant and took the country back to the dark days of blackouts, I and my officials rose to the challenge and restored power supply to Malawians. And now, that electricity means wealth creation for small barber shops at Kauma in Lilongwe City. That electricity means wealth creation for the welders in Ndirande and Masasa markets. That electricity means wealth creation to the big industries at Kanengo in Lilongwe, at Makata in Blantyre, and at Luwinga in Mzuzu. That electricity means wealth creation for the young people

running salons and printing shops, and the ones selling refrigerated goods.

And now that we are here, we will not stop, for our target has always been to increase our power generation capacity to 1000 Megawatts. So we will proceed to add 361 Megawatts through our investment in the Mpatamanga Hydro Power Plant. We will proceed to add 120 Megawatts through the Malawi-Mozambique Interconnector Project following further negotiations and revision of the Power Purchasing Agreement to increase the importation of electricity from the initial 50 Megawatts. We will proceed to add 50 Megawatts to the grid through the construction of Nanjoka Solar Power Plant in Salima. And we will proceed to install a GEAPP funded 22 million Dollar 20 Megawatt Battery Energy Storage System at Kanengo to stabilise the grid and allow more solar energy to be connected to the grid without system interruptions. We will proceed to install 16 mini-grids in some rural areas through the Malawi Electricity Access Project where feasibility studies for ten mini-grid sites have already been completed. This is all on top of the 21 Megawatts we have already added to the grid through the completion and operationalisation of the Serengeti Solar Power Plant in Nkhotakota.

And our focus on wealth creation through access to electricity is not limited to power generation, for that power also needs to be distributed to Malawians for them to use it for their own economic activities. I am therefore pleased to report that through

the Malawi Electricity Access Project (MEAP), we have connected 58,000 households to the grid against our target of 180,000 households to be connected by June this year, which will benefit over 790,000 people, while the Solar Home Systems component of MEAP has also connected 13,000 out of the targeted 200,000 households with 823,000 beneficiaries, and the Ndawala II project will connect 19,000 ultra-poor households between March and October this year. I am also pleased to report that we have finally overcome the delay in the implementation of MAREP Phase 9, which targets rural trading centres for electricity connections, and now that construction has started, 438 trading centres will be connected, enabling them to scale up their wealth creation activities.

Madam Speaker, another commodity critical for wealth creation is fuel, and although the decision to correct the false value that had been propped up for the Kwacha for over a decade was painful, one positive outcome is that it cured the fuel supply challenges that were resulting in cues all over town, and now those cues are gone. What remains now is the challenge of cost of buying fuel, and a key factor in this is how fuel is transported. And I am pleased to report that fuel transportation using the railway-line has increased from 1 percent to 13.7 percent and we aim to hit 20 percent by the end of next month.

But **Madam Speaker**, it is no secret that the world has already began transitioning to more sustainable electric vehicles, and it

would be a lapse in vision for us not to tap into such innovations. For this reason, we are diligently preparing policies for a conducive environment for Electric Vehicles. With an initial supply of 300,000 Dollars from the World Bank, my Administration will conduct feasibility studies, develop regulations, and pilot charging points for Electric Vehicles and Electric Buses, with the necessary tax waivers to incentivise motorists to make the transition. In the same vein, an investor has also been identified to bring 50,000 electric motorbikes that will not only create jobs for our youth, but that will also generate wealth through the accrument of carbon credits. That is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

TRANSPORT

Madam Speaker, this brings me to the transport sector generally, which cannot be separated from wealth creation efforts. In the year under review, my Administration continued to prioritize the rehabilitation of rail to open up Malawi's access to corridors that link markets and the rehabilitation of roads for moving goods and people around Malawi more easily. However, I must state that in the past few months, the transport sector bore the full brunt of the much-needed devaluation, scarcity of foreign exchange, fuel and cement shortages, and fixed costs contracts which have led to contractors suspending work. Thankfully, my Administration has since concluded discussions with most contractors, and work for most projects has resumed. Allow me

to therefore report on the progress we have made on various infrastructure projects that are critical to wealth creation activities by Malawians:

- I am happy to inform the people of Chikwawa that the construction of Namikalango Bridge is a mission accomplished;
- I am happy to inform the people of Mangochi that the securing of funding and designs for the Makanjira road is a mission accomplished;
- I am happy to inform the people of Kasungu that the rehabilitation of the Kasungu loop road is a mission accomplished;
- I am happy to inform the people of Lilongwe that the construction of one lane of the dual carriageway from Kanengo to Crossroads is a mission accomplished; and
- I am happy to inform the people of Chikwawa, Zomba, Phalombe, and Blantyre that the reinstatement of the sections damaged by Cyclone Freddy on the Chikwawa road, Zomba-Jali road, Phalombe Bridge, Nchalo-Ngabu road and Kabula is a mission accomplished;

Madam Speaker, there are also other works that are on the verge of completion for the enjoyment of Malawians. For instance, significant progress has been made on the Lilongwe City road expansion programme, specifically on Kenyatta Road, Sharrar Street, and Mzimba Street, which will be completed in the new

financial year. The other one is Mpatamanga Bridge, which will be completed before the start of the new financial year, while construction of the port in Likoma is at 80 percent. Operationally, we have also turned around public institutions like Lilongwe Handling Company and Air Cargo from loss-making companies to profit-making companies for the first time. Even Malawian Airlines, in which the people of Malawi are majority shareholders, had not seen a profit in seven years when I took office, and some well-educated economists and wise politicians advised me to just let it go bankrupt, but I refused, because I do not take anyone who treats the assets of Malawians as toys to play with seriously. Instead, we made the decision to recapitalize it, and then in 2022, the airline posted a profit of 4 billion Kwacha for the first time. This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

Madam Speaker, there are also works in the pipeline. Using a Build, Operate, and Transfer financing model, my Administration will be embarking on the following projects:

- Construction of over 3,000 kilometres of modern asphalt roads;
- Stabilization of over 500 kilometres of rural dirt roads;
- Rehabilitation of over 800 kilometres of Electric Traction Powered Standard Gauge Rail;
- Construction of Mzuzu and Mangochi Airports and of new terminals at Kamuzu and Chileka Airports;

- Construction of 20 story twin tower Government office at Capitol Hill;
- Rehabilitation of Maritime ports in Chilumba, Nkhatabay, Nkhotakota, Chipoka, and Monkeybay, as well as the acquisition of two new passenger ferries for Lake Malawi;
- Just last week, I launched work to build a five-lane Lilongwe Bridge that will have special lanes for cars, motorbikes, and pedestrians;
- The rehabilitation of M1 Road spanning from KIA Turn Off to Mzimba Turn Off and Kacheche to Chiweta, covering 300.7 km has commenced;
- The rehabilitation of the M5 Road from Balaka Market to Kaphatenga, Dwangwa, and Mukwiya is also progressing steadily, as is the upgrading of Dzaleka – Ntchisi – Mpalo – Malomo Road;
- The upgrading of the Chitipa – Illomba Road, upgrading of the Rumph-Nyika road whose construction will start soon and the rehabilitation of municipal town roads in Kasungu, Dedza and Balaka, which have not been attended to in 30 years;
- Upgrading of the Nambuma-Kasiya road whose engineering design and feasibility study will soon commence;
- The rehabilitation of the Marka-Bangula railway section is in progress, with over one-fifth of the Marka section complete, which can now accommodate trains from Beira; and

- Similarly, the rehabilitation of the Liwonde-Lilongwe Railway section continued throughout the year under review, and works are expected to be completed in the next financial year, which means that in the coming months, train operators will be able to transport goods from Blantyre to Lilongwe for the first time in almost three decades.

Madam Speaker, as you can see, there is so much being done now that was neglected for years. Just take the Thabwa Masenjere Fatima road in the Lower Shire, for example, which has been neglected by one Administration after another, leaving the people of East Bank in Chikwawa and Nsanje feeling cheated. Well, that stops now. I am happy to inform the people of East Bank that this year I am upgrading that road to Class 1 Bitumen, and we will call it the Gwanda Chakuamba Highway. I am also happy to inform the people of the Lower Shire that this year we will begin extending the Chapananga Road, and when it is done, it will be called the Sidik Mia Highway.

Madam Speaker, another case of neglect of public works in the past is the water supply problems that the people of Lilongwe have endured for far too long, and there is no Malawian who will ever forget that at one point during the previous Administration, the people of Area 18 were made to drink water that had faecal matter in it. By God's grace, that dark chapter is behind us and the future of water supply in Lilongwe, Salima, Dowa, and Ntchisi looks bright, because this coming financial year, works on the

Salima-Lilongwe Water Project will start, and 105 billion Kwacha has already been mobilized to make sure of it.

Madam Speaker, I could also talk all day about Mzimba, whose people were also cheated by empty promises about a Mombera University, in whose name people siphoned billions as salaries for jobs at a University that never existed. But all I need to say to the people of Mzimba is that you have suffered enough, and so I am happy to inform you that preliminary works on the construction of Inkosi ya Makosi M'mbelwa University began a month ago.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Madam Speaker, even though climate change is a threat to wealth creation because of its capacity to destroy livelihoods that took decades to build, it is also a wealth creation opportunity my Administration is keen to leverage. My Administration has, therefore, embarked on significant initiatives to secure climate financing and enter the arena of carbon trading. Specifically, we have developed a national framework and guidelines for carbon trade, scaling up annual carbon credit production to a remarkable 5 million Tonnes worth up to 100 million Dollars. To prepare ourselves for this new arena of wealth creation and harness its potential for environmental sustainability and economic growth, **Madam Speaker,** my Administration is

committed to operationalizing Article 6 offices, the National Carbon Registry, and the Carbon Trust Fund.

With respect to wealth creation opportunities in forestry, there is wealth in our trees, if properly cultivated and managed. This is why my Administration is managing 6,525.95 hectares of natural regeneration in degraded forest reserves and on customary estates, surpassing the initial target of 4,000 hectares. We have also successfully rehabilitated 2,709.85 hectares of forests in 21 forest plantations nationwide, as well as planted close to 15,000 hectares of customary forests across all districts. As for wealth creation effort in aquaculture, my Administration plans to establish Mega Aqua Farms across Mzimba, Karonga, Chitipa, Rumphu, Mchinji, Lilongwe, Mangochi, Machinga, Mulanje, Salima and Thyolo. As a result, **Madam Speaker**, fish production will increase from 186,732 Metric Tonnes to 196,180 Metric Tonnes, which will bring significant economic benefits amounting to nearly 200 billion Kwacha. This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

INFORMATION, TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITIZATION

Madam Speaker, the digital age we find ourselves in now offers many wealth creation opportunities for young people. And as an Administration, we seek to facilitate these opportunities by creating a conducive environment for putting them to good use.

To this end, my Administration registered the following achievements:

- We enacted the Data Protection Act, which I signed into law last month to guarantee the safety of personal data;
- We finalized establishing diplomatic data corridors with Tanzania, and Zambia to create dedicated internet data corridors for lowering internet costs in Malawi;
- We signed commercial agreements with Zambia's Fibercom and Tanzania Telecommunication Company Limited to reduce international bandwidth rates from 12 Dollars to 5 Dollars per Megabyte;
- We suspended the expiry of National Identity Card between August 2023 and January 2026 to increase accessibility and inclusivity to socio-economic services;
- We embarked on a mass National ID Outreach registrations in all districts and the current total of registration stands at over 11,000,000, and as of last month, we increased the NRB's printing capacity to 11,000 ID cards per day, a rise from less than 1,000 ID cards per day in 2023; and
- We fully integrated the National Registration System with the systems of the National Economic Empowerment Fund (NEEF), the Msonkho Online of the Malawi Revenue Authority, the Malawi Land Information Management System of the Ministry of Lands, the ePassport, ePermit, eVisa system of the Department of Immigration, and the Know Your Customer systems for at least five banks.

Madam Speaker, the most exciting development in our digitalization agenda is that we are one of the first countries in Africa to embrace high-speed satellite internet. As a result, we have met our internet coverage target way ahead of time and our internet data rates are among the cheapest on the continent. This has enabled us to use electronic payment and revenue collection systems in Government. In short, **Madam Speaker,** we are going digital and there is no going back

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Madam Speaker, in line with our wealth creation agenda, we have a foreign policy of economic diplomacy. One key objective in this is to safeguard the international reputation of Malawi so that we remain an attractive destination for investors. I am therefore pleased to report that during this period, Malawi was re-elected to the Human Rights Council General Assembly for the period of 2024 to 2026. Similarly, our success in securing the Extended Credit Facility with the International Monetary Fund and the subsequent restoration of budgetary support from the European Union and the World Bank have signalled to international investors that our economic and governance reforms meet international investment standards.

As a result of our restoration of Malawi's standing in the world, our diplomats have secured new markets for our products,

including a market in the United Kingdom for our coffee, a market for our soybeans and groundnuts in China, a market for our sesame and guar seeds in India, a market for our gemstone in Belgium, and a market for our minerals in the United States. I am also pleased to announce that Malawi has opened a new embassy in Morocco, with accompanying agreements for economic cooperation.

LANDS, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Madam Speaker, one of the determining factors of a citizen's ability to create wealth is the affordability and security of land and housing. I am therefore pleased to report the following achievements in this area:

- We adjudicated and demarcated 152,681 customary land parcels and issued 16,000 customary land certificates;
- We established 28 land registries, one for each district, and 234 members of staff have been re-deployed to those councils, and land registration will now be done at district level; and
- Of the 10,000 houses we have earmarked for the security agencies, over 1,000 houses have either been completed or are near completion, thus creating over 150,000 jobs.

This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

INDUSTRY AND TRADE

Madam Speaker, while we work on structural issues affecting productivity, we are also hard at work to ensure that what we produce has value added for domestic and foreign trade. As a result of our effort, it is projected that there will be a 9 percent improvement in the balance of trade from 2.3 billion Dollars in 2023 to 2.1 billion Dollars in 2024. This is on account of anticipated improvements in exports due to our export diversification drive, our implementation of Mega Farms, and our value-addition initiatives, mainly in agro-industries, including cooking oil and wheat flour processing. As such, imports are expected to decline.

At the same time, we are pursuing favourable market access opportunities through the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and sub-regional Trade Agreements that assure exporters of continued growth in exports to COMESA, EAC and SADC regions. And to ensure the repatriation of foreign exchange earned from produce exported from Malawi, my Administration has restricted export licences to select commodities and to those exporters that use MRA bonded warehouses.

Madam Speaker, on the industrial front, the recent passing of the Special Economic Zone Bill, which I just assented to a week ago, paves way for the transformation of the Malawi Investment and Trade Centre into an Authority, which will play a pivotal role

in the implementation of Special Economic Zones that will create over 240,000 direct jobs and expand our export base.

Madam Speaker, all the wealth creation initiatives I have highlighted in these sectors are just the tip of the iceberg, and what is critical is to make sure we are preparing citizens for the opportunities emerging. This we are doing through existing community colleges, but I am also happy that there are at least six community colleges under construction that will be completed this coming financial year.

C. TOWARDS ACHIEVING JOB CREATION

LABOUR

Madam Speaker, in this financial year 197,809 new jobs have been created. This brings the cumulative total of new jobs since 2020 to 1,358,809, mostly in the Agriculture, Health, Education sectors and management support services. However, as members of this House know, my Administration has also embarked on the quest to secure jobs for young people abroad, and we have already succeeded in sending hundreds of workers to Israel. I want to thank those Honourable members of the House who recently went to Israel to see for themselves that the programme is legitimate and safe. And what is most exciting is that we are now on course to sign a Government to Government initiative

and agreement with Israel, aimed at exporting 100,000 young people to go and work there, which will translate to 6 million Dollars a year in remittances.

Madam Speaker, the ultimate goal of all our job creation efforts is the same as the ultimate goal of all our wealth creation efforts, namely to improve Malawians' standard of living through better public service delivery. I would, therefore, like to briefly report on the services we have delivered in the areas of access to water, education, health, public safety, and sports.

WATER AND SANITATION

Madam Speaker, in the Water and Sanitation sector, our key achievements in delivering services are as follows:

- Through the Free Water Connection initiative, which I launched two years ago, we have connected about 15,000 low-income households to clean water;
- For the people of Lilongwe, particularly Nanjiri, Nalikule, Mpingu, Dzenza, we have rehabilitated 167km of distribution pipeline through the Lilongwe Water and Sanitation Project;
- For the people of Ntcheu, Neno, Blantyre, Machinga, Mangochi, Zomba and Balaka, we have made safe water connections through Malawi Watershed Services Improvement Project targeting about 20,000 beneficiaries;

- For the people of Mangochi, we have made safe water connections through the Potable Water Supply Project serving the Lake Shore areas of Mpondasi, Mtakataka Turn-off and Sauya targeting 93,000 beneficiaries;
- For the people of Nkhata-Bay, we have made water connections through the Water Supply and Sanitation Project targeting 105,000 beneficiaries;
- For the people of Karonga, we have built a 26 million Dollar facility they will soon be connected to;
- For the people of Mzuzu, Ekwendeni, and Chintheche, we have improved clean water access for over 400,000 people through the EkweThe Water Efficiency Project (MNWEP);
- For the people of Blantyre, we commenced the overhaul of the current water supply system for Blantyre City for the benefit of 330,000 residents through the Malawi Water and Sanitation Project-1 (MWSP-1); and
- For the people of Dowa, we are improving sanitation services to 150,000 people through the Dowa Water Supply and Sanitation Project.

EDUCATION

Madam Speaker, in the Education sector, the following were some of our service delivery achievements during the year:

- We have recruited about 2,000 primary school teachers on permanent basis and 4,200 auxiliary teachers, and trained 7,304 Head and Deputy Head Teachers;
- We distributed about 68,000 tablets to 498 primary schools and trained 689 officers and 2,600 teachers through the BEFIT Programme, because our kids deserve to be given digital literacy;
- Two weeks from now, I'll be launching the construction of about 10,000 classrooms nationwide with funding from the World Bank under the Malawi Education Reform Programme (MEREP);
- We took over 66 Community Day Secondary Schools that we have been constructing in partnership with the US Government under the Secondary Education Expansion for Development (SEED) Project;
- We expanded 70 Day Secondary Schools under the Equity with Quality and Learning at Secondary (EQUALS) Project;
- We trained about 1,400 Secondary School Head and Deputy Head Teachers through the School Leadership programme, while also recruiting about 2,000 and promoting 380 Secondary School teachers;
- We increased the number of students accessing loans by 15.9 percent, reaching about 26,000 students;
- And in the year ahead, we will continue the construction of Mzuzu University Library and Auditorium whose progress is currently at 58 percent completion; we will complete

construction of the University of Malawi Administration Complex whose progress is currently at 76 percent; and we will continue the construction of Kamuzu University of Health Sciences (KUHeS) Administration Complex whose progress is at 43 percent; and

- Next month, I will be commissioning a University Innovation Pod (UNIPoD) another facility for manufacturing innovative products at Malawi University of Business and Applied Science (MUBAS) whose construction is now complete with funding from UNDP.

This is progress, and we will build on it to keep our recovery going.

HEALTH

Madam Speaker, in the Health sector, the following are key highlights of the services we enhanced:

- Because of some emerging cases of Covid-19, we increased the number of those vaccinated, reaching a total of 5,260,394 people who received the first dose of Astra-Zeneca and Pfizer vaccines by the end of October;
- We contained the cholera outbreak which ravaged our nation from February 2022 to July 2023 and left a death toll of 1,766 out of 58,938 cases;

- We contained a Polio outbreak by implementing 6 waves of Polio supplemental immunization campaigns reaching 9.4 million Under 15 children;
- We achieved the UNAIDS 95/95/95 target for the treatment of HIV and AIDS, reaching it in September 2023, way ahead of the set date of 2025, and new infections in people aged between 15 and 49 declined by over 50 percent between 2021 and 2023, while my Administration also introduced injectable pre-exposure prophylaxis for the prevention of HIV transmission;
- We secured a new grant with the Global Fund of 517 million Dollar to tackle HIV, TB, and Malaria;
- We recruited 3,930 temporary health workers, while a further 2,741 health workers are expected to be recruited in the next five weeks;
- The National Cancer Centre at Kamuzu Central Hospital, which already provide Chemotherapy services now has a radiotherapy facility to be completed in April 2024;
- We inaugurated the Lilongwe Institute of Orthopaedics and Neurosurgery (LION) at Kamuzu Central Hospital; and
- We completed the construction of Nancholi, Area 23 and Chilanga-Makina Health Centres, and the Infectious Disease Centre at Zomba Central Hospital, while construction of Mponela Community Hospital is at 80 percent and construction of Domasi Community Hospital is near completion.

Madam Speaker, I should also mention that to improve efficiency and speed of service, my Administration is going ahead with the implementation of central hospital autonomy, starting with Zomba Central Hospital whose Board of Trustees was already appointed.

JUSTICE

Madam Speaker, equitable prosperity can only happen in a system that is run by laws and regulations and not by the capricious whims of the powerful and elite. As such, our wealth creation agenda must move hand in hand with a governance agenda that upholds the rule of law. In this regard, **Madam Speaker,** let me highlight priority areas of governance reforms that are noteworthy:

- My Administration prosecuted 852 criminal cases and contested 1,320 civil cases in various courts, saving more than 1 trillion Kwacha in the process;
- My Administration established the Confiscation Fund, in which confiscated proceeds of crime will be kept for transparency and accountability;
- We prepared and presented to this House 29 Bills, 25 of which have been enacted into law;
- For the Judiciary, we are set to begin the first phase in the construction of the Judicial Complex across the street from this House, beginning with a perimeter fence that will start

going up next month; while construction of the Commercial Court in Blantyre will soon be finalised;

- Meanwhile, the Judiciary concluded 28,557 cases, representing a 43.82 percent case clearance rate, but it is hoped that the digitisation of the Judiciary through its connection to the Government Wide Area Network (GWAN) in thirteen districts will improve the clearance rate going forward; and
- Last but not least, **Madam Speaker**, I must congratulate the Malawi Human Rights Commission for achieving Astatus in Malawi's performance on human rights, despite our limited resources, and I wish the Commission well as it embarks on the work of facilitating the amendment of the Human Rights Commission Act, Gender Equality Act, and Access to Information Act.

As we press ahead with the protection of human rights, so we do the same with the protection of our resources by keeping up the fight against corruption. In the year under review, the AntiCorruption Bureau received 665 corruption complaints and investigated 423 corruption cases, of which 132 were successfully completed, with 26 prosecutions being concluded, resulting in 8 convictions and the forfeiture of stolen assets valued at 191 million Kwacha.

HOMELAND

While we uphold the rule of law through the courts, **Madam Speaker**, we also continue to work on the enforcement of the law through our agencies. To enhance the public safety environment within our borders, we have done the following:

- We have recruited and trained 3,499 Police Officers, 2,184 of them male and 1,315 female;
- We have also recruited 714 Prison Warders, 266 of them female and 448 male, and we are set to complete the training of 1000 more by the end of next month.

YOUTH AND SPORTS

Madam Speaker, in sports, our first point of celebration is in football, where the Malawi Women's National Football team, the Scorchers, achieved an outstanding feat by winning the Cosafa Women's Championship with a 100 percent record, having won all five matches. This is progress, and we must not only build on it, but also replicate the success factors in other disciplines and extend that mindset to everything we do for the development of our youth. I am therefore pleased to report what we have invested in youth in the year under review:

- We enrolled 3,582 youths from 60 youth groups and 60 Area Development Committees (ADCs) to pursue different development courses under the National Youth Service Programme;
- We made 20 percent progress in the construction of Mzuzu Youth Center, while construction of the Griffin Saenda and

the National Aquatic Sports Facilities in Lilongwe will commence again in the coming Financial Year due to the increase in the scope and cost of the works to be completed; and

- We also initiated a project to construct a new stadium in Mwanza, which is scheduled to be completed in the coming fiscal year.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, UNITY, AND CULTURE

Madam Speaker, I am happy to report that in the Ministry of Local Government Unity and Culture, 25 out of 28 districts achieved higher scores under the Local Authority Performance Assessment (LAPA). As a result, these districts became eligible for funds under the Performance-Based Grants. So far, 20.2 billion Kwacha has been disbursed, funding 179 development projects nationwide.

Crucially, **Madam Speaker**, my Administration has sustained the tripled allocation of resources to the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). And thanks to this increase, every member of this House who is honest can testify about the development projects that are now standing in their constituency through the CDF resources I continue to provide. I am sure that every member of this House is honest enough to tell their constituents that the bridges, police units, schools, classrooms, and offices being constructed in their area have been made

possible by my decision to triple the Constituency Development Fund. I am saying this, **Madam Speaker**, because I keep receiving strange reports about Members of Parliament who tell their constituents that I do not care about them and that there is nothing I am doing for them, when the whole time they are saying so they are standing next to a development project that my Administration is funding through the CDF. But I am sure that these reports are false, and if I am right, **Madam Speaker**, that no member of this House can speak in that manner, then this is progress, and I for one would like to build on it to keep our recovery going.

III. CONCLUSION

But allow me, **Madam Speaker**, to conclude in exactly the same place I started. We are a nation 60 years old, and that calls for seriousness. We are a nation in a state of great and compounded pain and that calls for seriousness. We are a nation under geopolitical, climatic, and fiscal pressures, and that calls for seriousness. And in our context, seriousness means focussing on what matters most, focussing on priorities. In our context, the priorities are food security, wealth creation, and job creation. In our context, those priorities can best be achieved by ensuring that every Ministry, Department and Agency, including this House, is doing its part to promote and stimulate productivity in the ATM Strategy areas of Agriculture, Tourism, and Mining.

Madam Speaker, if all of us collectively do that, we will make our economy grow and make our wounds heal faster than expected.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your attention.

I Yield the Floor.