Republic of Malawi

SPEECH BY

THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI, RT. HON. DR. SAULOS CHILIMA

AT THE

INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE MALABO MONTPELLIER FORUM

ON

12-12-2017

AT

COTONOU, BENIN
• Your Excellency, Abdouleyo Bio Tchane, Minister of State for Planning and Development,
• Honourable Ministers present here,
• Distinguished representatives of multilateral and bilateral development agencies,
• Members of the Malabo Montpellier Panel
• Members of the Press
• Ladies and Gentlemen

I feel greatly honoured to be here in Cotonou, Benin, to co-chair this inaugural meeting of the Malabo Montpellier Forum.

From the onset, allow me to convey greetings from His Excellency Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi and the people of Malawi to His Excellency President Patrice Guillaume Athanase Talon and the people of the Republic of Benin.

The Forum’s strong emphasis on evidence-based exchange, dialogue and mutual
LEARNING AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS, CREATES A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP SUSTAIN AND BROADEN BETTER OUTCOMES IN AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY CANNOT BE OVER EMPHASIZED. FOOD AND NUTRITION ARE A PRIORITY IN THEIR OWN RIGHT AS WELL AS TRIGGERS OF ACTIVITIES IN OTHER SOCIO-ECONOMIC SPHERES. FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IS A MATTER OF NATIONAL PEACE, IMPROVED EDUCATION OUTCOMES, IMPROVED HEALTH OUTCOMES, IMPROVED LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY, AND IMPROVED COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT.

THIS EXPLAINS WHY FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY IS A MAJOR PREOCCUPATION OF MANY GOVERNMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES.

TO UNDERSCORE THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY, LET ME HIGHLIGHT THE POLICY SPACE FOR FOOD AND NUTRITION AT INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVELS: THE UNITED NATIONS’ SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS HAS GOAL NUMBER TWO WHICH IS AIMED AT ACHIEVING ZERO HUNGER. THE AFRICAN UNION’S AGENDA 2063 HAS ITS ASPIRATION NUMBER ONE AS ‘PROSPEROUS AFRICA BASED ON INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.’
In 2003, Africa developed the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) which obliges states and governments to allocate at least 10% of national budget to agriculture sector in order to grow the sector by at least 6% annually. Almost a decade later, the African Union declared 2014 as ‘Year of Agriculture and Food Security in Africa’ as a way of tilting focus towards agriculture and food security.

Further, the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) has agriculture and food security and Climate change and natural resource management as two of its strategic directions. The Southern African Development Corporation (SADC) Food and Nutrition Strategy for 2015-2025 has its goal to significantly reduce food and nutrition insecurity in the region by 2025. In Malawi where I come from, we have just completed a development strategy for 2017-2022 and priority number one is agriculture, irrigation development and climate change management. Additionally, we are implementing the National Agriculture Policy.

This is enough evidence that food and nutrition security are top priorities in
Africa and forums like this one are very relevant.

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers and Invited Guests

Despite the substantial amount of effort and zeal to achieve food and nutrition security, Africa is yet to realise optimal results and attain the status of ‘food and nutrition secure continent.’ Food and nutrition insecurity remain pervasive in many parts of Africa. In SADC for example, between 2004/05 and 2013/14, population at risk of food and livelihood insecurity ranged from 12.2 million in 2012/13 to 22.2 million in 2008/09 out of an estimated 277 million people. High stunting levels are recorded in Lesotho, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Democratic Republic of Congo. Lately, Africa has seen increasing prevalence of over nutrition such as obesity in addition to under nutrition.

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers and Invited Guests

The gap between substantial effort and sub-optimal outcomes can be explained by a number of factors. With increasing occurrence and severity of climate change
EFFECTS, AGRICULTURE PERFORMANCE IS AT THE MERCY OF NATURE.

Information accessed on NEPAD website shows that 10 years of implementing the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) saw agriculture sector in Africa growing by about 3.2% a year much below the 6% target. In Malawi, government has consistently complied with the CAADP requirement by allocating at least 10% of national budget to agriculture sector with a peak in 2013 when the sector got 21% of the national budget. Despite such substantial investment agriculture growth has been inconsistent due to effects of climate change such as drought and floods. This is because intra-sectoral budget allocation put less emphasis on resilience building.

Diet diversification is yet to be fully embraced. Many people are used to a specific staple food and other food types are regarded as not food enough. Figures from SADC Food and Nutrition Security strategy (2015-2025) show that between 2008/09 and 2013/14, cereal production in SADC countries was consistently lower than requirement and the gap widened since 2011/12. However, during the same period, cassava production was higher than
required especially in Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Tanzania. What this means is that if we successfully advocate for diet diversification, it is possible to mitigate against effects of food and nutrition insecurity as other food types can complement cereals.

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers and Invited Guests,

Achievement of targets of the Malabo Declaration and delivery on the African Union’s Agenda 2063 will require aggressive and concerted efforts by all governments, and stakeholders.

Several common features distinguish some African countries that have made significant progress towards reducing malnutrition. These countries have all been able to carry out successful interventions at the political, institutional and programmatic levels.

As I speak, several African countries are on track and have dramatically reduced malnutrition over the last 15 years. Across Africa, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger dropped from 28% to 20% between 1990 and 2015, although the total
NUMBER CONTINUES TO INCREASE DUE TO A RAPIDLY GROWING POPULATION.

It is also pleasing to note that between 2000–2016 seven African countries - Senegal, Ghana, Rwanda, Togo, Cameroon, Angola and Ethiopia – made the most progress in reducing malnutrition, cutting levels by between 40 and 60 percent.

YOUR Excellency, Honourable Ministers and Invited Guests,

These success stories would force one to ask what have been the reasons behind such positive developments.

The first ingredient to the success has been Global ambition: There has been greater attention to the need to fight malnutrition from African Union Agenda 2063, the Malabo Declaration and the SDGs, the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, G20 meetings, etc. And our meeting today comes at a very important time.

Second is the attention at all levels; international, regional and national levels. This needs to continue. Thrust needs to be maintained in order to guarantee sustainability of this positive trajectory.

Malawi Situation
In my country, Malawi, we are also registering tremendous progress in fighting malnutrition. Between 1992 and 2016, malnutrition declined from 55.8% to 37.1%.

As a country our asset in achieving this lies in the strong political commitment at the highest government level to improve nutrition.

We joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement in 2011 to help reverse the lack of progress in reducing malnutrition, particularly stunting and as figures above show, this is paying dividends.

There is much work being done across ministries and departments, and in partnership with other stakeholders for a holistic and inclusive approach to fighting malnutrition:

We have established a National Nutrition Committee (NNC), a multi-stakeholder platform to mobilize resources, and support the implementation of food and nutrition interventions. The Committee is decentralized to District Nutrition Coordination Committees, represented by district nutrition focal points, village development committees and community leaders for action on nutrition groups.
The Civil Society Organization Nutrition Alliance, which forms part of the NCC is particularly active in engaging NGOs and traditional authorities in discussions around nutrition.

They also provide support and training to the Parliamentary Committee on HIV/AIDS and Nutrition to ensure that nutrition issues are central to discussions at higher level.

Through Community-based interventions, we have placed a strong focus on community-based action, with the 1,000 special days of National Nutrition Education and Communication Strategy, which prioritize a reduction in stunting levels through behavioral change campaigns and awareness raising.

As a country, we also adopted legislation on salt iodization, food fortification, consumer protection, maternity leave and the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

However, much as Malawi and many other African countries are registering progress, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done.
Your Excellency, Honourable ministers and invited guests

Going forward, I would like to recommend the need for attention on the following:

(i). **African governments should invest in area that intensify agricultural productivity and food production through irrigation and improved water management; improved technology including certified seed of improved varieties; access to markets, post-harvest handling; agro-processing; agricultural extension and infrastructure.**

(ii). **Diversification of production systems and diets with indigenous fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. This provides new opportunities for...**

+ **Agriculture-led growth for smallholder farmers.**

+ **Biofortification of staple cereal and roots and tubers to address specific micronutrient deficiencies.**

+ **Fortification and Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs) in food processing**
(iii). Investments in market information technologies, product standardization, and food safety regulations.

(iv). Investment in climate resilience building. African agriculture should shift from largely rain-fed to irrigation. Malawi is finalizing National Resilience Strategy to harness efforts and pool resources towards building resilience.

(v) Regulation enforcement is required. Counterfeit food stuff need to be inspected and removed from the market. This requires governments and corporations to work together to promote healthier diets and consumption patterns through appropriate food system regulation and controls.

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers and Invited Guests,

It is my expectation that if the issues I have raised meet the desired attention and seriousness they deserve by all member states, we can really manage to win the battle against malnutrition and hunger in our respective countries.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the government and people of Benin for the great hospitality that has been accorded to
ME AND MY DELEGATION SINCE WE ARRIVED IN THIS BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY.

AND IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE THAT I ONCE AGAIN CONVEY GREETINGS FROM MY PRESIDENT, HIS EXCELLENCY PROF. ARTHUR PETER MUTHARIKA, AND THE PEOPLE OF MALAWI, TO HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT PATRICE GUILLAUME ATHANASE TALON AND THE PEOPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF BENIN.

I LOOK FORWARD TO A FRUITFUL DISCUSSION, TO HEAR ABOUT HOW SOME COUNTRIES HAVE ACHIEVED REMARKABLE PROGRESS AND TO DEBATE CHALLENGES THAT STILL LIE AHEAD OF US.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION. MAY GOD BLESS US ALL.