



STATEMENT BY
THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF THE MALAWI CONFEDERATION OF
CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

AT
THE OPENING OF THE 31ST MALAWI INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR,
CHICHIRI TRADE FAIR GROUNDS, BLANTYRE

ON

8TH AUGUST 2019

- **The Director of Ceremonies;**
- **Distinguished Exhibitors and Captains of Industry Here Present;**
- **Officials from the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism and Indeed Other Government Officials Here Present;**
- **Members of the Press**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am deeply honoured and privileged to welcome you all to our function this morning which marks the start of the 31st Malawi International Trade Fair. I take your presence with great exception. On behalf of the Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MCCCI), and indeed on my own behalf, I would like to register my unqualified appreciation and gratitude to you for setting aside time to be here on this occasion. I am sincerely encouraged and motivated to see how much you care about this event.

Before I proceed further, I would like to pick up from where the Director of Ceremonies left by stating that our gathering here signifies the commencement of the International Fair. You are all accustomed to the fact that normally the start of this event starts with a lot of official fanfare. This year is different as the official launch may take place after the start of event. Let me hasten to state that this is not the first time that our Trade Fairs have been opened after business has already started. This is therefore not necessarily unusual. We will keep you informed of further developments as the Fair proceeds.

Let me further convey my indebtedness and obligation to you, Distinguished Exhibitors, for sticking with us despite the start of the Trade Fair being postponed twice. You will recall that the original commencement date of the Trade Fair was 20th June 2019. Thereafter we moved it to 6th August. We had to shift from both these days to provide space for emerging matters of constitutional significance. We kept you informed about these issues. For certain the aforementioned developments affected the turn-up numbers, both foreign and domestic. Most significantly, however, we are finally here this morning to witness the start of the long awaited Trade Exhibition. We wholly believe that business has to continue even in the face of very grim circumstances.

Distinguished Exhibitors, Ladies and Gentlemen

The Fair has been organized to provide your businesses with a platform to, among other things, showcase innovative products and services; to demonstrate products to your customers, both existing and potential; and to interact with and get feedback and insights about your products from your customers and other stakeholders.

We also expect participating businesses to explore opportunities to learn from each other. The single most important source of your businesses' growth and competitiveness is knowledge. It is knowledge that enables businesses to produce new businesses, explore new markets, manage businesses efficiently and effectively and in general catapult your businesses into the future. We expect you to be keen to obtain this knowledge through your participation in this auspicious event.

Enabling your businesses to create and build relationships with other businesses and stakeholders is another reason why we have organized this Exhibition. As you are no doubt aware, each business operates in a web of networks. There is no better place to create business linkages with these network players than at this Exhibition. This is paramount in the business journey in order to achieve competitiveness. The theme of this Fair is **“Achieving Competitiveness through Integration into Regional Value Chains”**. For your businesses to integrate into regional value chains, it will be paramount to build very close relationships with businesses that you will interact with during the period that you will be here.

When these objectives are attained, your businesses should be able not only to grow but also to remain competitive in the market.

Distinguished Exhibitors, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The fruits of the trade exhibition ultimately ought to be reflected in how much businesses are contributing to the pace at which our economy is growing and improvement in the welfare of the people of Malawi. It is no secret that our economy is not growing at the desired rate of at least 7 percent per annum in order to make a meaning dent into reducing poverty levels in this country and thereby improve the people’s welfare. The questions we should be providing answers to include ‘how our businesses should exploit opportunities that an event like this one offers. For instance, if your businesses expand as a result of new markets you will obtain from participating at this Fair, you should be able to employ more people. If you obtain new technological knowledge from fellow participants, the products and services that you will be producing next should be competitive in the market,

whether locally or regionally. It is for that reason why we pride ourselves in organizing an event such as this one. It is one way in which we can make a contribution to our great nation.

Distinguished Exhibitors, Ladies and Gentlemen

Returning to the theme of this International Trade Fair, i.e. ***Achieving Competitiveness through Integration into Regional Value Chains***, I would like to emphasize on the need for your businesses to look beyond the local space. During this Fair we have participants from Zimbabwe and Mozambique. However, your integration opportunities go beyond that. From our previous experience and knowledge, there will be representatives of other countries from the region that may not have physical presence here, who will be scouting for new sources of raw materials as well as markets, and other different forms of business relationship. Some of these representatives may already be based here while others will come from outside the country. Our plea is that we should grab those opportunities and not let them slip through our hands. Our assessment of performance by local companies in fulfilling the orders they obtain here has not been a mixed bag, and generally not encouraging. Let us not be satisfied with the domestic market only. We should take advantage of the new opportunities that knock on our door from within the region. In that fashion we will be able to integrate our businesses into the regional value chains. Working with regional players even by providing a simple service means we are exporting and therefore integrated in the regional value chain. Providing inputs for domestic companies that finally export their finished products is participating in regional value chains, even if that means indirectly. Let us therefore be on the lookout for such opportunities especially now

that, in addition to COMESA, SADC and the Tripartite Free Trade Area, we have the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I did stress earlier on how paramount new knowledge to our business growth aspirations is. The knowledge can be acquired by observing how other businesses do things differently from us as well as from listening to experts. At this Exhibition we have organized a number of knowledge sharing platforms in the form of workshops. We will have the following organisations making presentations on varying topics at the workshops that we have organized for your benefit:

- The Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA);
- The Malawi Investment and Trade Centre (MITC);
- The Malawi Energy and Regulatory Authority (MERA);
- The Reserve Bank of Malawi;
- Synthesis Agriculture, and;
- Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TEVETA).

Let me encourage all of you to send representatives to these workshops. They will add value to your businesses.

Further we have organized a Networking Dinner tonight at Sunbird Mount Soche Hotel at which the Anti-Corruption Bureau will interact with participants on the various initiatives they are taking to prevent and fight corruption. Those interested should contact Linda Pete for more details.

Let me also hasten to state that as you, no doubt, noticed, there were judges assessing your stands yesterday. The exercise ends today.

Winning exhibitors will be recognised and handed medals at the Dinner this evening.

Distinguished Exhibitors, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I already alluded to the fact that we have participating companies Mozambique and Zimbabwe. We are also expecting a Bangladeshi company that already paid its participation fees.

In total we have 187 local companies participating in this Exhibition. This compares with 224 companies last year. However, considering the prevailing political environment pre and post May 21, 2019 General Elections, we are satisfied with this level of participation. On this note, we would like to pay special tribute to all of you for coming to participating in this event during this trying period. We are confident that you will be handsomely rewarded for your bravery.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

As I conclude, please allow me to extend a vote of thanks to the following companies that have sponsored this event in a number of ways:

- SDP for providing free access to internet to exhibitors located in the COMESA Hall;
- Export Development Fund for financial support
- Gold Mountain Media for the provision of In-store radio advertising in major shopping malls and in the COMESA Hall
- Chiponde Business Group for the provision of graphic designing of all our visibility materials; and

- Adis Energy for the provision of cooling services in the COMESA Hall with their innovative cooling system that uses solar energy.

Let me take this opportunity to extend my thanks to staff of my organisation, MCCCCI, for all the efforts made in organizing the Fair. I would like to applaud the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism for working hand in hand with us in organizing this Fair. The Ministry is indeed our true partner.

At this point I would like to declare that the 31st Malawi International Trade Fair is now open to business.

THANK YOU ALL FOR LISTENING AND MAY GOD BLESS YOU.