



**REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

**REMARKS**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY**

**DR LAZARUS MCCARTHY CHAKWERA**

**PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

**DELIVERED**

**AT THE SWEARING IN CEREMONY**

**FOR MALAWI HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**MTUNTHAMA STATE RESIDENCE**

**TUESDAY, 7<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021**

**The Secretary to the President and Cabinet, Mr. Zanga-Zanga Chikhosi;**

**Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Honorable Titus Mvalo;**

**The Law Commissioner, Ms. Rosemary Kumisonyo Kanyuka;**

**The Ombudsman, Ms. Martha Chizuma;**

**Members of the Human Rights Commission;**

**Solicitor General and Secretary for Justice, Mr. Reneck Matemba**

**The Executive Secretary of the Human Rights Commission, Ms. Habiba Osman;**

**Media representatives;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Let me begin by congratulating Miss Chikondi Chijozi for the honour of becoming a member of the Seventh Cohort of the Human Rights Commission. The oath you have taken is a solemn one, and it is at such solemn occasions that it is most fitting to reflect on the things that ought not to be forgotten by those of us fortunate enough to wear the mantle of constitutional office.

Before I share one or two reflections of my own, let me express my deepest condolences to all of you on the passing of your Chairperson, the Late Reverend Patrick Semphere, who until his death, worked tirelessly for the advancement and consolidation of human rights within our borders. His demise was a shock and a blow to me personally, but also an incalculable loss to our nation. In honour of his years of service and in memory of his exemplary life, I ask that you join me in standing to observe a moment of silence. May his soul rest in peace.

Let me proceed by moving to my first point of reflection on human rights, which is to remind all of you that before we take on the work of championing human rights, we must

first ensure that human rights are something we ourselves practice. I can think of nothing more tragic than the idea of a Human Rights Commissioner who routinely violates the rights of his or her workers at home, or the rights of his or her subordinates and colleagues at work, or the rights of his or her vendors in the market, or the rights of his or her own children, or the rights of his or her fellow-citizens in the public square. Human Rights must be practiced, not just preached.

My second point of reflection for all of you is that human rights must be fought for, not just promoted. It is naïve to ever assume in this world that everyone wants human rights to thrive. That is simply not so. Both history and personal experience teach us that the curve of human nature bends towards self-interest from birth, which is counter to the selflessness that the advancement of human rights demands. As such, our approach to the consolidation of human rights must account for those who will naturally work at cross-purposes to human rights in their quest for selfish interests.

Additionally, our approach must also account for those who may very well militantly seek to abuse the rights of others as a result of having an evil nature that takes pleasure in doing harm to others. My point is that advancing human rights is no walk in the park and must not be taken on by the timid and cowardly. The forces you have to fight off to protect human rights are formidable, often armed by vast and powerful networks with deep pockets. In the face of such forces, it is not enough to merely defend human rights, for that entails waiting for human rights to be attacked. I am saying that you must take the fight to them whatever it may cost you.

Thankfully, when it comes to taking on powerful forces and keeping them in check, Commissioner Chijozi is in good company with the other Commissioners, including Human Rights Warriors like the Law Commissioner and the Ombudsman, who are beacons of light in our nation. In that regard, let me assure you all that regarding the A status of the Commission at international level, it is my commitment to not allow you to be downgraded on my watch. I therefore call on the Minister of Justice to work with you to fulfil the

requirements for maintaining your status during next year's review. The same applies to any resource needs you need my Administration to meet in order to maintain that status.

With these full remarks, let us Build a New Malawi free of human rights abuses. I thank you all for your kind attention.

**God bless you all.**