

**MALAWI HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**



**SPEECH BY COMMISSIONER SCADER LOUIS, CHAIRPERSON  
OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**DELIVERED ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY  
NTCHEU DISTRICT**

**ON**

**10<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2020**

## **SALUTATIONS**

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

**Ms. Rosemary Kunitsonyo Kanyuka, Law Commissioner and Commissioner of the Malawi Human Rights Commission;**

**Honourable Ms. Grace Malera, The Ombudsman and Commissioner of the Malawi Human Rights Commission;**

**Fellow Commissioners of the Human Rights Commission;**

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

**Ms. Habiba Osman, Executive Secretary for Malawi Human Rights Commission;**

**Rudolf Schwenk, Resident Coordinator, United Nations, Malawi Country Office;**

**Head of Corporation and Representative of Ambassador and Head of Delegation of European Union in Malawi;**

**Paramount Chief Gomani of the Maseko Ngoni of Ntcheu;**

**Honourable Semion Salambula, Member of Parliament for Ntcheu West Constituency;**

**Mr. Francis Matewere, District Commissioner for Ntcheu;**

**All Civil Society and Non-Governmental Organizations Present;**

**Representatives of Tonse Alliance and All Political Party representatives present;**

**Members of the Media present;**

**All Protocols Observed.**

**Guest of Honor, Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is my great pleasure and honor to join the previous speakers to welcome you all, the distinguished representatives from Government, Civil Society and members of the surrounding Communities in Ntcheu to today's commemoration of the International Human Rights Day. My special thanks are to you honorable Minister for accepting to represent the State President at the important function. Before I request your, Honorable Minister, allow me to make few remarks relating to this commemoration.

**Guest of Honor,** Human Rights Day is observed by the international community every year on 10 December. This day was set aside in 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Today, Malawi joins the international Community to commemorate this day. The day provides an opportunity for all of us to celebrate our human rights, reflect on the achievements and area needs improvement in promotion and protection of Human Rights. The activities displayed today show that your government and its collaborating partners in all the regions of Malawi are using creative and strategic efforts to advance the promotion and protection of human rights.

**Guest of Honor**, the theme of 2021 International Human Rights Day is *EQUALITY-Reducing inequalities, advancing human rights. **Simply said: All Human, All Equal.*** This year's Human Rights Day theme relates to Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that "*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.*" The principles of equality and non-discrimination are at the heart of human rights. Equality "means that we embrace our diversity and demand that all be treated without any kind of discrimination," says UN Human Rights High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet. Further, Equality is aligned with the 2030 Agenda and with the UN approach set out in the document Shared Framework on Leaving No One Behind: Equality and Non-Discrimination at the Heart of Sustainable Development. Equality has the power to help break cycles of poverty; it can give young people the world over the same opportunities; it can help in advancing the right to a healthy environment; it can help tackle the root causes of conflict and crisis.

Guest of Honor, Ladies and Gentlemen, our nation still faces inequalities in women employment, accessing basic commodities, accessing of social services for the poor, person with disabilities, and the elderly, unemployment for the youth, inequalities of land ownership for women, among others. Therefore, the theme is calling all of us to address and find solutions for deep-rooted forms of discrimination that have affected the most vulnerable people in societies, including women and girls, persons with disabilities, children, migrants, key populations, among others.

The Commission believes that equality, inclusion and non-discrimination, in other words - a human rights-based approach to development - is the best way to reduce inequalities and resume our path towards realizing the 2030 Agenda. As we continue on the path towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must strive for a world where a life of equality in dignity and rights is a lived reality for all.

The Commission is therefore calling for a human rights-based economy that can break the cycles of poverty. The rising costs of basic commodities potentially violate the rights of individuals. We call for equal opportunities for women and the disabled in employment, equal opportunities for youth empowerment, compliance to 60 – 40 gender parity provided in the Gender Equality Act and in provision of social services.

**Guest of Honor,** Regarding Covid-19 has not only brought in new inequalities but it has also exacerbated pre-existing inequalities in our societies. For a time like this, this theme is not only befitting but it is capable of guiding our efforts in combating inequalities brought by COVID-19 and other vices such as corruption and gender stereotyping which have adversely affected our economy, education, livelihoods and business operations and employment opportunities for many.

Honorable Minister, ladies and gentlemen, Human Rights Commission is encouraged by the efforts made by the Government in responding positively to the Covid 19 pandemic by raising awareness, establishing isolation centers and incentives to the health workers, and procuring vaccines that were made available to all people. Further, the collaborative efforts

displayed by the Civil Society in addressing inequalities brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic continues to affect all of us and our work especially in Malawi, in this moment, more than ever, collaborative efforts are needed to ensure that Human Rights are enjoyed by all regardless of the societal, economic, racial and religious differences that may be there.

**Guest of Honor, ladies and gentlemen,** according the Ministry of Health, our current statistics indicate that we have remained at level 1 of the pandemic, as defined in the Public Health (Corona Virus and COVID-19) (Prevention, Containment and Management) (Amendment) (No3) Rules, 2021, since the first week of October 2021 These are indeed positives strides which are owed to the collaborative efforts by Government and civil society in the fight against COVID-19. This should however not make us to relent in the fight against Covid-19 as the country and the world all over is faced with an emerging threat of a fourth wave. We should not lax in our adherence to COVID-19 measures and restrictions as reports show that the new variant is more deadly compared to the previous waves. Let me take this opportunity to urge those who have not been vaccinated to do so, as the saying goes, 'no one is safe until we are all vaccinated'. We pray that the Government through, Ministry of Health and the Presidential Task Force on Corona virus will monitor the situation and give the nation relevant information concerning this new Covid-19 Variant and put in strategies to ensure that its spread and transmission is minimized.

**Guest of Honor,** in the face of the new COVID-19 variant, our expectations as Human Rights Commission are that our efforts must be based on human rights values and principles which includes equality and non-discrimination in accessing Covid-19 treatment and vaccines.

**Guest of Honor,** we celebrate the membership of Malawi in the United Nations Human Rights Council. This achievement was not in vain, the Government of Malawi continues to provide a conducive environment for safeguarding rights for all Malawians.

**Guest of Honor,** the Commission, on its part, has contributed to the theme by investigating human rights violations, providing advices to persons affected by inequality and discrimination, and educating the general public about their rights and their obligations. As I speak today, the Commission has been to several districts in all the regions in Malawi including Mzimba, Kasungu, Nkhatabay, Mchinji, Ntchisi, Zomba, Mangochi, Phalombe, conducting human rights clinics, awareness and investigating complaints of human rights violations and referrals as part of commemorations for this year's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence.

**Honourable Minister, ladies and gentlemen,** the Commission urges duty bearers to adhere to their human rights obligations and rights holders to articulate, demand and claim entitlement to their rights. let us all join hands in the fight against human rights abuses to defeat this vice once and for all. When we celebrate human rights, we must do so when everyone is safe.

**Honorable Minister,** let me once again thank you most sincerely Honorable Minister for accepting to represent the State President at this special occasion. I would be failing my job if I close my speech without acknowledging United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Union (EU) through the Chilungamo Programme for their support towards this function. The support from these two institutions has complimented the allocation that we obtained from the Government to enable this function to take place.

At this, juncture, I request to you Honorable Minister to deliver your key note address.

I thank you very much Honorable Minister.