



**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF LOCAL
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT,
HON.KONDWANI NANKHUMWA MP,
DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
LILONGWE INTERNATIONAL MAYORS
FORUM
ON**

**16TH MAY, 2018
AT THE BINGU INTERNATIONAL
CONVENTION CENTRE (BICC)
LILONGWE, MALAWI**

- Your Worship The Mayor of the City Of Lilongwe, Councillor Dr Desmond Bikoko
- Honorable Mayors and all Distinguished Delegate
- Honorable Ministers here present
- The Resident Coordinator for the United Nations, Ms Maria Jose Tores Macho. Management and Staff of
- The Head of The United Nations Office for Sustainable Development, Dr John yoon.
- The Director of African Local Governments Academy, Dr Najatzarrouk.

- The Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government & Rural Development, Mr. Kiswell Dakamau.
- District Commissioners.
- Senior Government officials.
- All Councilors here present.
- The Chief Executive Officer for the Lilongwe City Council, Mr. Moza Zeleza.
- Members of the Press.
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

First and foremost, let me welcome you, the foreign delegates, to Malawi and its Capital City: Lilongwe.

On behalf of His Excellency the State President, Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika, the Malawi Government and the people of Malawi, I wish to put on record that we are greatly honoured to host this historic event in Malawi. We are also excited to note that for the first time, the International Mayor's Forum is being held in Africa. You have put both Malawi and Africa on the map. It is our sincere hope that we will have the best Forum and participation from all delegates while at the same time share our experiences and tap into each other's ideas so that together we can create a better world to live in and better cities for all our people.

Honorable Mayors and Distinguished Delegates you may recall that the first similar meeting was held in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 15th March, 2017 whereby almost 50 Mayors and city leaders from around the world discussed a number of sustainable urban development issues. One of the main conclusions of the meeting was that there is a strong need to establish such an international platform, where Mayors and city leaders can exchange experiences (successes and challenges) of their cities and share their vision on local actions to achieve sustainable cities by 2030.

Honorable Mayors and Distinguished Delegates

You might be aware that the key objective of this Forum is to provide an international platform for policy dialogue and knowledge sharing through the various presentations and discussions on key aspects related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG11, at Local level as a means to achieve a better understanding of successes, lessons and specific mechanisms and accelerate the in-depth transformation needed to make our societies sustainable and resilient.

Honorable Mayors and Distinguished Delegates

As per the thematic areas surrounding this Forum that cities are essential to sustainable development, in the same vein, cities can play a leading role in economic development of countries.

However, it is imperative for us to recognise that the current trend of urbanization has brought about significant social and environmental challenges. These include lack of access to adequate, affordable urban land and housing options, urban infrastructure and basic services for a growing number of citizens, who suffer from rising inequality and exclusion. This is particularly true in developing

countries, where about one third of urban dwellers or more than 860 million people live in slums, their numbers increasing rapidly as in many cases urbanization is taking place most informally.

Honorable Mayors and Distinguished Delegates

Malawi is one of the fastest urbanizing countries in the world with an annual growth rate of about 3.8 % as of 2016 and about 15 % of Malawi's total population live in urban areas and cities. The majority of the urban population is concentrated in Malawi's four major cities of Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu and Zomba with only 3.3 % of

the population residing in other urban areas. Rural to urban migration has been the main driver of urbanization in Malawi. However, just like other developing countries, many challenges exist to maintaining cities in a way of creating jobs and prosperity to all while not straining land and resources. Common urban challenges include congestion, lack of financial resources to support in the provision of basic services, shortage of adequate housing and declining infrastructure.

Honorable Mayors and Distinguished Delegates

In order to meet the growing demand for improved basic social services,

housing and general urban infrastructure the Government of Malawi has put human settlement and physical planning as one of the key focus areas of its its medium term growth strategy called: **Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III (MGDS III)**, which runs from 2017 to 2022. Key focus areas of MGDS III is to have in-built strategies aimed at equitable access to different services for both rural and urban populations.

One of the key indicators of this goal that is also applicable to Malawi hinges on the proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing

areas. This indicator integrates the component of the population living in slums that has been monitored for the last 15 years by UN-Habitat in mostly developing countries with two new components, for instance people living in inadequate housing and informal settlements, that aim at broadening the spectrum of inadequate living conditions to capture realities that are also present in more developed countries.

Honorable Mayors and Distinguished Delegates

You may wish to note that about one in seven people in Malawi live in urban areas and 60 percent of these live in

slums and informal settlements. Just like elsewhere, lack of adequate housing and poor delivery of basic services continue to be amongst the major challenges of urbanization and its sustainability in Malawi.

It is for this reason that Malawi Government is implementing Rural Growth Centers Programme. The Rural growth centers are remotely located and act as catalyst for growth centers in rural areas. The centers provide for basic amenities similar to an urban area so as to make rural areas attractive. This will eventually decongest big cities and reduce rural-urban migration since local

communities have access to basic social economic services within the rural setting.

Therefore, it is necessary for the Government to ensure access to adequate housing and basic services and upgrading of all the city slums, for the full recognition of the urban poor as the rightful urban dwellers, for realizing their potential and enhancing their prosperity and that of the country as a whole. I wish therefore to emphasize that this indicator is extremely relevant to Malawi as it will help the country to track progress of the various interventions and strategies that are put in place to address the

key challenges faced by people living in slums and informal settlements.

Honorable Mayors and Distinguished Delegates, Throughout our four cities, the Malawi Government also partners with several organizations to promote and enhance innovative programs that are being implemented in line with the SDG 11 which is emphasizing on **Sustainable Cities and Communities.** I believe you will be able to appreciate the initiatives in the two sites you will be visiting tomorrow. One site is showcasing the low cost housing whilst the other one is showcasing the waste management.

Honorable Mayors and Distinguished Delegates On behalf of the Malawi Government, let me extend our sincere gratitude to the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) which is part of the division for Sustainable Development (DSD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), for the support towards U.N. Member States in planning and undertaking integrated sustainable transformation, notably through knowledge sharing, research, training and partnership building.

Let me also thank the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) who

are the major co-organizers of the Lilongwe International Mayors' Forum. I am aware that they have been on board from the initial stages of planning for this event. UNDP has also been key in making linkages with partners in Africa, particularly Malawi, including my Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. We do not take your generosity, support and cooperation for granted. You are indeed true partners in development.

**Honorable Mayors, Distinguished
Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Finally, let me wish you all our foreign delegates and guests, a pleasant stay in Malawi and in the City of Lilongwe, in particular. Please feel the warmth and hospitality of our people and be sure to visit and invest in our beautiful country, Malawi – **the Warm Heart of Africa.**

It is now my pleasure and honour to officially declare the Lilongwe International Mayors Forum officially open.

May God Bless you all and also bless all our countries.

Thank you all for your attention.