

SPEECH BY

**THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOYCE BANDA
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

AT THE OCCASION OF THE 2009 GENERAL ELECTIONS EVALUATION CONFERENCE

**THEME: "MALAWI'S 2009 PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION:
DEMOCRACY IN PROGRESS"**

**CROSSROADS HOTEL, LILONGWE
23RD JUNE 2009**



- o The Speaker of Parliament, Honorable Henry Chimunthu Banda, MP
- o Honorable Justice Anastasia Msosa, Chairperson of the Electoral Commission
- o Cabinet Ministers
- o Members of Parliament
- o Members of Diplomatic Corps
- o Representatives of International Cooperating Partners
- o Members of the Civil Society Organisations
- o Members of the Press
- o Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I feel honoured to address this audience during this very important Post-Election Conference for the just-ended Presidential and Parliamentary Elections. I am aware that stakeholders have gathered here to accord our country an opportunity to analyse the 2009 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections. I am therefore convinced that the Conference will help all of us in deciding on how we move into the future. I thus sincerely commend the organisers for coming up with such a noble idea.

Let me take this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation to all Malawians who took time to queue and vote on the 19th May 2009. It is their political will that was defined through the ballot box; it is that simple tick on the ballot paper which now empowers His Excellency the President, the Cabinet and Members of Parliament to serve the nation of Malawi. Specifically, speaking on behalf of the Democratic Progressive Party, I wish to register our heartfelt acknowledgement to all those who placed their vote and thus, hope and trust, in his Excellency, the State President Ngwazi Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika and myself, to run the affairs of this country for the next five years.

I would like to assure you that, after gruesome and heated campaign period, all people of Malawi should understand that the President and the Vice President are leaders for all Malawians. In this regard, our role is to serve the entire spectrum of society, and not only those who voted for us. In any case, given that the election is through secret ballot how would we know those who indeed voted for us, if we were to serve those sections of our citizenry. My appeal, therefore, is that since the campaign period may have created wounds, now is the time to heal the wounds and work in unison for the common good of Mother Malawi.

May I at this juncture, take this opportunity to thank, in a special way, the chairperson of the electoral commission, the commissioners and the entire staff, for handling the electoral process in such a professional and decisive manner. Although there was unprecedented pressure and some glaring challenges, you rose up to the occasion, and this led to the general acceptance of the results. However, like in any competition, a few complaints were not unexpected and we believe that these complaints are currently being addressed by competent authorities.

I would also like to thank the Army and the Police for supporting the process in terms of security, the school teachers and other volunteers who worked tirelessly at the polling stations. Above all, I would like to confess that without the financial and technical support provided by the International Cooperating Partners, our General Elections would not have registered this resounding success. It is, therefore, befitting to express profound gratitude for the support rendered by you, our partners from abroad.

Mr. Chairman

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Coming to the important subject that has brought us together here, permit me to repeat what I said in Victoria falls when I addressed the 13th summit meeting of the COMESA Heads of State and Government a couple of weeks ago: the Outcome of the General Elections is a clear demonstration that democracy is coming of age. However, the maturity that has been manifested through the elections emanated from the kind of leadership that Malawi has had the last five years. For the first time, his Excellency the President Ngwazi Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika has proved that with determination and focus on clear goals and objectives we can easily succeed. undisputably, the president has brought a new lease of multiparty politics to Malawi where issues of regions, tribes, religion, resources, no longer determine politics. this is simply because Ngwazi Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika has offered the visionary leadership, guided the political and administrative system, and encouraged the people to believe in themselves. therefore, for the first time, people have voted for candidates of their choice.

For some strange reasons, we all believed and we lived under this myopic thought that our political parties are based on regional lines.

Your theme for this conference is therefore a candid and true description of the situation on the ground: DEMOCRACY IN PROGRESS. for Malawi and the world at large, 19th may 2009 will go down in the annals of history as the watershed for Malawi politics. the electorate spoke through their vote and, honestly, this is a wake up call to all of us who hold political positions: we must from now realise and understand that the electorate, who are the employers or if you want, shareholders, not only vote politicians into power, but they equally vote politicians out of power. now, since the employers have spoken, it is now our duty to deliver on the electorate's expectations. this is non-negotiable, ladies and gentlemen.

Let me also underscore the sentiments expressed by the state president that the DPP-led government will in no way take advantage of its majority seats in Parliament to abuse its powers or to question the legitimate separation of power that builds the backbone of any democratic system. rather, we are geared towards using our majority to push for development agenda and to clear the backlog of laws that have to be passed in parliament. We will work hard to implement the governance goals and strategies articulated in Malawi's national development plan as anchored in the Malawi growth and Development Strategy (MGDS).

Mr. Chairman

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am proud to see that, as first female vice president of Malawi, I come at a time that the parliamentary and presidential elections were, for the first time, labeled *free and fair, held in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility, and were characterised by large voter-turn out* by all observer missions. Consequently, Malawians raised the country's bar in terms of good governance internationally, and we have been rated as the second most peaceful country in Africa. This is the more reason that the DPP government would want to safeguard good governance and the positive reputation it has earned, because even in the MGDS, governance has been rated as the top most theme, favourable for the implementation of the other themes in the plan.

One issue that is very dear to my heart is the continued efforts to uplift the status of women in our society. Thus, I feel energised to see that the new Malawi has also ushered over 20 percent of women into the national assembly. I know this is not what those of us advocating gender equity and equality aimed at, but we need to applaud the effort that has begun to pay dividend. My humble appeal is that we should not relent because we need to continue to establish and strengthen the necessary framework that would be bale to deliver in five years' time to reach the 50-50 goal. the attainment of over 20 per cent proves that Malawi is a changed society. On my part, I promise to make sure that my position in the second highest

office respects the wishes of women and all the disadvantaged groups in our society. Let us, therefore, forge ahead, more so with the Local Government Elections next year, to ensure that more women take part in politics.

Mr. Chairman

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If you may allow me to go back to the current political landscape, I want us to note that in our democratic society that opposition plays a vital role in governance matters. In this regard, I wish to assure all Malawians and our cooperating partners that the government will respect the views of the opposition, because we believe we will have a responsible Opposition this time around. It is, therefore, my sincere hope that the Opposition Members of Parliament have derived a lesson from the outcome of the vote - they need to criticise constructively.

May I add a reminder to our esteemed members of parliament that their roles and responsibilities are clearly stipulated in our constitution. As members of parliament we are called to national duties, which demand shared responsibilities. The government will, therefore, do everything possible to empower as many people as possible in their respective roles and responsibilities to ensure that development continues to flourish. I can assure you that by the end of 5 years, Malawi will be the same, as long as we stop pulling each other in different directions.

Finally, let me thank the Centre for Multiparty Democracy-Malawi (CMD-M), the Department for International Development (DfID), the German Development Cooperation and its two sister projects, the Forum for Dialogue and Peace and the Malawi-Germany Programme for Democratic Decentralisation, the Irish Aid and the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), for jointly organising and funding this important conference.

It is now my humble duty to declare this conference officially opened. I wish you fruitful and cordial deliberations during the next three days.

Thank you for your attention and may God bless you all.

Sourced from the VP's office - 23 June, 2009