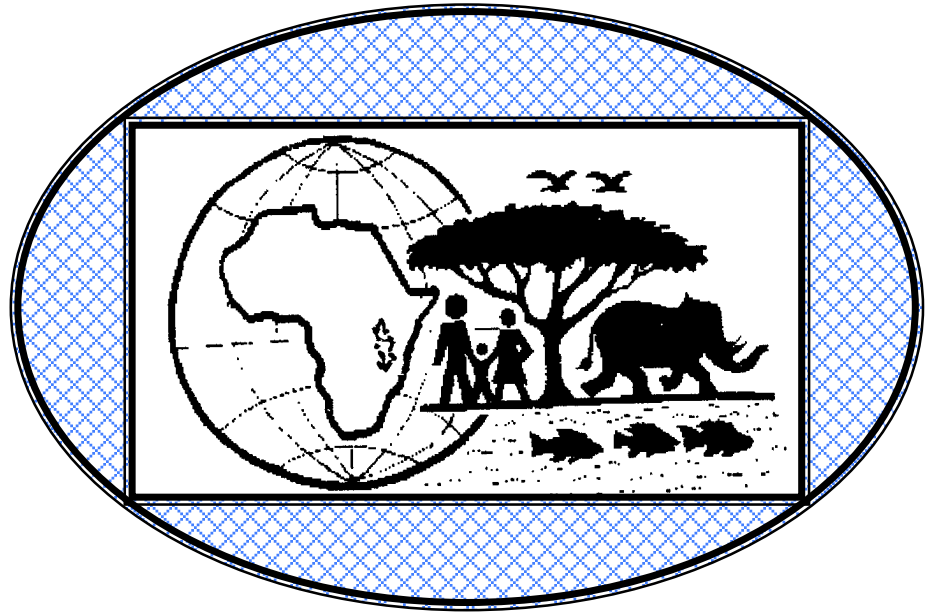


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***DECEMBER
2010***

***REVIEW OF
THE YEAR***

**News clippings
with analysis
from the major
newspapers in
Malawi**

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LIST OF NEWSPAPERS REVIEWED

DAILY TIMES MALAWI NEWS THE NATION
THE WEEKEND NATION THE SUNDAY TIMES
THE GUARDIAN NATION ON SUNDAY

Please note - The bishops' pastoral letter of 31 October 2010 - *Reading the Signs of the Times: Socio-Political and Economic Issues in Malawi* - and the Malawi Government reaction can be found at the end of this document.

INTRODUCTION

The *Centre for Social Concern CFSC* is involved in all sorts of activities in order to promote the dignity and betterment of every Malawian. The Centre works with many other secular and religious organisations in an effort to attain these goals. As a faith based organisation *CFCS* all that it does is permeated by what are commonly known as *Christian values* that are especially found in *Catholic Social Teaching CST*. Our work is a journey on which we travel with many different people who have different faiths but be all have common belief in the goodness of people and want to walk with others so that we can reach our full potential together.

Religion and Civil Society

The very idea that their creator endows all human beings with certain inalienable rights, as it is echoed in the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights*, did not derive from ancient paganism or from the modern secular Enlightenment. The source is the Old Testament notion that human beings are made in the image of God, and thus have inviolable rights as well as a moral awareness that is, as the New Testament says, in some sense written on the hearts of all. The idea of the endowment of all persons with an inherent dignity has developed well beyond its points of origin but it has become critical to our assessment of the forces that shape current human welfare; politics, social relations, health, economy-market practices, and our view of poverty.

Responsibility of Government

To harness human welfare we have the apparatus of government whose primary responsibility is to ensure that available resources are equitably allocated to enhance human welfare. Besides the apparatus of government there are social relations and organisations outside state or governmental control. People belong to these organisations for social, political, economic and many more other reasons. The bottom line is to assure that the enhancement of human welfare is done in a just, equitable manner and that the best practices are in place to ensure progress in human welfare. Though independent of the governmental structure, these organisations frequently become involved in political activities. They try to influence governmental decision-making and participate in a variety of public participation processes; all in the name of safeguarding human rights and dignity; ensuring that the enhancement of human welfare pays particular attention to rights and dignity of all.

Human Rights and Dignity

The values of human rights and dignity that the civil society defends so strenuously have their origins in religion as we have seen in the first paragraph. As such, the relation that is there between the origin of human rights and the act of defending these rights prompted out topic, "*Religion and Civil Society*." The link between the origin of human rights and the defence of these rights is a strategic priority as it bolsters shared objectives, and addresses mutual concerns between religion and civil society. The ancient prophets anticipated this and the New Testament just conveys the importance of that link in its idea that the world is something that is, but which is fallen and thus is something to which we are not to conform. Yet the world is something that God so loved that it is being redeemed, and those who know God are

sent into it to aid in the process of redemption and transformation, even as the world groans in travail toward a new creation and a new civilisation, the New Jerusalem.

Moral Convictions

Those who receive the vision of this promised reign of God are to employ every moral means to make it actual. Many of these people are engaged in civil society even though they might not be diehard religious people. What is intended here is to demonstrate how religiously based moral convictions do permeate secular institutions, beliefs, and practices to affect the entire globe, as is now the case with civil society in our country and beyond. In other words, the defence of human rights and dignity (*religious values*) is a core reason as to why people (*civil society*) should put self-interest aside in favor of communitarian sentiments that lead people to get involved in a fight for justice and fair treatment of each other in all our dealings and social relations.

A Fair Deal

Consider, for instance, treating the supplier as a person with rights to a fair deal. Establishing a policy of service to the customer (who may be a total stranger) and honouring the spirit of legal constraint that define liability are among the ways in which economic practices may acknowledge the moral and spiritual dignity of each person and fulfil the logic and laws of economics justice. Accordingly in fighting for economic justice we would be defending those religious values, rights, and the dignity of the human being.

Relationship Between Religion and Civil Society

In short, what we meant to show all this time was that there is a mellow relationship between religion and civil society. It might be complex to understand all the elements involved but the most important determinant element of this relationship is the perception of the common good with other people. Hence one would be understood to say that religion is that subtle force yet a kernel embodiment in the institutional and moral fabric of our common life, and our common endeavours as civil societies. As such religion cannot necessary be considered the realm of the private.

PREVIEW

In general Malawi in the year 2010 had some ups and downs in as far as the political scene is concerned. Journalists in Malawi took turns to report on what enjoyed a lot of press coverage in the year under review. Politics seems to have overshadowed some equally important topics like the environment, health and education in 2010.

The ruling *Democratic Progressive Party DPP* lately has been sailing in troubled waters because of its failure to be democratic enough in its succession plan. Though President Bingu wa Mutharika announced that he will retire when his two constitutional terms expire in 2014 the *DPP* appears not to have a clear leader who will take over from Bingu.

There is tension that this scenario has raised and there are cold wars between the vice president Joyce Banda and the president's brother Peter Mutharika who is also Minister of Education. At present all the focus is on selling Peter Mutharika as the next president for the party and later on Malawi.

The economic issues also had a fair share in the press in the year 2010. Marred with forex and fuel shortages, the economy suffered a great deal. At the same time Malawi's newly accumulated loans appears to have increased. This is despite the fact that the nations debt was cancelled some years ago. This current debt situation on the international and local scene has met some criticism from the civil society organizations that feel government can do better by avoiding some of this debt.

As usual government paints a rosy picture of the food situation in the country. Since government started the fertilizer subsidy programme there are reports of food surplus in Malawi. But while the situation might be true on national level some households still do not have food. All in all Malawi is recognized on the world map because of its effort in eradicating hunger. Notably the United Nations review on the Millennium Development Goals reported that Malawi has made tremendous improvement in eradicating hunger.

In 2010 the Catholic Church played a major role in checking government in its daily work. Catholic bishops' pastoral letter under the title *Reading the Signs of the Times* raised a lot of debate in many forums. The letter, which gave a true picture of what is happening in Malawi, is still not a favourite to those who feel were targeted. At present one can safely say the church is not in Mutharika's good books following the pastoral letter, which only told the truth.

The health sector still struggled with the shortages of drugs and equipment. Surprisingly some of the drug shortages are happening because of theft by some staff. On the other hand in education there seems to be some improvements made in the area. The increase in the passing rate of candidates during the 2010 Malawi Schools of Education Examination could mean something positive is happening.

POLITICS

The State of Politics in 2010 – a Year of Much Promise but ...

Last year we called 2009 the year of the watershed. We meant to say that there was a fundamental change in the way Malawians voted. They gave the President and his running mate an overwhelming majority. They gave the *Democratic Progressive Party DPP* a majority in parliament which grew beyond two thirds of all the seats, because of independent Members of Parliament who joined the winning party. A conference devoted to the elections called them free but not fair. This notwithstanding, the nation was full of hope that the much touted development agenda of the incumbent President Bingu wa Mutharika would actually materialize. The acceptance speech at his swearing in ceremony confirmed this.

But even last year there were already tell tale signs. A bloated cabinet seemed out to reward those who had supported the *DPP*. The fact that all chairs and their deputies in all the parliamentary committees were *DPP* members was another sign not of reconciliation but rather of revenge. The establishment of an advisory council made up of many independent voices from civil society was largely interpreted as a way to silence civil society. The fact that when the council finally started all members were requested to swear an oath of secrecy did not indicate a climate of openness and debate. The Forex and fuel situation were already bad last year and this lasted throughout most of 2010. The quota system, or rather the equitable access to university education was seen by people from the Northern Region as targeting them. It caused even more anger because of the massive support that Bingu wa Mutharika got from there. Even the leader of the opposition, which is always the prerogative of the biggest opposition party, was as per change of standing orders to be elected by parliament.

Our review last year ended by indicating that the challenge facing Malawi was to see how to promote an open debate on the issues facing the nation in a parliament that had a more than two thirds majority. This proved to be correct. The press almost unanimously gave its verdict during the year by saying in different ways that the august house has reverted to the function it had under the one party state of Kamuzu H. Banda, namely that of a house of praise. It could also be qualified as the speedy house seeing the speed with which bills were passed. Or as some prefer to call it: a rubberstamping parliament. In spite of all this, at each sitting of parliament our honourable members clamber for more and better perks, like daily subsistence allowances of more than US\$100 a day in a country where the minimum wage is US\$30 per month. Not so surprisingly there is consensus on this, even if on little else.

Malawi's President Heads the African Union

Bingu wa Mutharika became chairman of the *African Union AU*. The country was proud until it realized that it would cost one billion kwacha. Critics started asking questions of costs versus benefits. The frequent trips of the chairman led to some dubbing him our journeyman crisscrossing the globe, attending all sort of meetings and receiving several awards. He did spread his message of food security, subsidies, and Africa as a breadbasket. The coming years will show whether it was all accepted and became a lasting policy.

The Vice President

The vice President Mrs. Joyce Banda did not fare as well. While she too received awards, they were never much talked about. Even her national engagements were not covered on the national TV. When she complained about this, the national TV station became even nastier by calling her all kind of names denigrating her. This became so bad that in their pastoral statement of 31 October the Catholic bishops mentioned this explicitly and asked for respect for the function and person of the vice President. In reply the *DPP* sacked her from her function as first vice President of the party. Indeed confirming the bishops' words and becoming a 'sign of the times'.

Local Elections

Local elections, which should have taken place in November 2010, were postponed to April 2011. At one moment it looked as if things were progressing and the electoral calendar was being implemented. It took another bombshell event to blow the elections out of the water and make their future uncertain. In a highly controversial move the President suspended the whole *Electoral Commission EC* because of suspected fraud. More than one billion kwacha was missing or not accounted for according an audit report. Or was it an audit? Some deny this. The *Malawi Law Society* took out an injunction on government which it largely disregarded. It has started procedures for contempt of court. All is pending because of the end of the year holydays. Many fear the local elections will not take place at all. They will agree that something needed to be done in case of fraud but in such a way as to safeguard the elections.

The Wedding

The most glittering event of the year certainly was the marriage of Bingu with Callista. The CIVO stadium was changed into an open-air cathedral and all the bishops and many priests were present at this occasion. It cost about 300 hundred million kwacha which translates into US\$ 2 million. Not many commented on this except for *The Lamp* magazine. Privately some people spoke about extravagance (exaggerated, excessive, wasteful spending). In the first cabinet reshuffle of the year Madam Callista Mutharika was first put on the list of ministers. But the reaction led to the definitive list not having her name. The President commented that she was way above cabinet. Some functions that at first were taken care of by the Vice President Joyce Banda were transferred to her.

Creating a Dynasty

Besides the First Lady's ascendance the younger brother of the President Peter Mutharika has been talked about very much in all manner of press statements, programs on TV etc. Last year Bingu warned people not to start jockeying for positions and declaring their interest in the top job. He declared this year that if his brother Peter wanted to run for President, being a Malawian he was free to do so. This has opened the floodgates and all manner of people have declared they will support his candidacy. It is actually still three and a half years till election time!! The spin-doctors have some problems to convince the nation that what is happening here is not campaigning. Commentators have warned that history is repeating itself. The incumbent Bingu wa Mutharika was pushed forward by the once mighty UDF, a

move that cost it dearly. Comparisons are made between then and now. The constant campaign to have Peter Mutharika as sole *DPP* candidate for the elections of 2014 is making a farce of democracy and one of the root causes of unease in the country at the moment. Seeing ministers, with all kind of degrees, MPs and Chiefs publicly joining the Peter Mutharika camp has been called a pitiful spectacle. Many more sober people, and these include the so-called simple villagers have other ideas. They will show them in May 2014.

A (be it short-lived) Glimpse of Hope and its Aftermath

At certain moments the nation is given a glimpse of hope as if sanity is finally prevailing. Such a moment was the opening of the May sitting of parliament. The speech by the President was claimed to be his best yet. A show of true statesmanship, it contained a call to forget the past, to reconcile and work together for the development of the country. But leafing through the newspapers it becomes clear that this moment was short lived. We are soon back to the norm when Malawians are called difficult and those who say they were not consulted drunks.

By then many NGOs, CBOs and clergy had openly said they were not consulted on the change of the flag. Some of them say that it is unconstitutional to change the flag without a referendum. But again the President just calls them difficult and whether they like or not the bill will pass. It was passed, it was assented too and next day the new flags were flying in Lilongwe.

The bill proposing the age for a girl to get married got so much protest that it was sent back to parliament. The President did not assent to it, again a moment that gained him praise. The bill on pensions got a similar reaction and was sent back to the finance and budget committee of parliament. Other bills were pushed through at record speed, especially the national budget.

Bills were passed that introduced among others changes that give power to the minister to hire and fire District Commissioners DCs a move which could compromise their impartiality as returning officers in elections. The President was reported by the press as recommending that the much touted *National Youth Enterprise Development Fund* should take care first of all of the *DPP* youth.

While all this goes on Aleke Banda dies losing a long battle with cancer. The nation pauses a moment from its day-to-day business and recognizes in him a great Malawian. John Tembo, leader of the biggest opposition party wins a bid in the high court and is again made the leader of the opposition in Parliament. This proves the independence of the judiciary. An overzealous MP proposes that Bingu should be allowed to serve a third term in office. The *DPP* is reported to use government office space thus mixing party and state functions and giving the lie to the promises made time and again not to fall into that temptation.

To bring a little bit of excitement Jumani Johanson declares he is Kamuzu's son. So may be after all the first Ngwazi was a normal human being. The story continues and the nation waits eagerly what the DNA tests will bring out. If all is according to what he claims, it might be a solution for the *Malawi Congress Party MCP* succession?

Cabinet Reshuffle

After the August cabinet reshuffle we see the exit of Goodal Gondwe, Patricia Kaliati, Kachali, Namakwha and Moses Chirambo. It is the time the President reminds us that little knowledge is dangerous. Leading to questions whether he is the all knowing one blasting NGO's, Donors, and the media. In the meantime the opposition continues with intra party wrangles vying for leadership. The old guard does not want to move, and the parties already grunting under the heavy burden of last year's lost elections don't seem to be able to put up a credible opposition.

A DPP Militia?

DPP youths remind us of the Young Pioneers under Banda and the Young Democrats under Muluzi, using violence to punish those who ask pertinent questions at presidential press conferences or to those who show some support for the vice President. When Moses Chirambo dies after having been dismissed from his ministerial post and Rev Nyondo mourns him at his funeral, linking the dismissal with his death, the reverend is put in prison for sedition. Is it so surprising one could ask that various groups called for sanity through public statements like the ones of the *Public Affairs Committee*, some churches and several NGO's. One can almost hear people say: and where is the Catholic Church?

The Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Statement

The biggest bombshell of the year is probably the catholic bishops pastoral statement: *Reading the signs of the times*. Published on October 31 and read that day in Catholic churches throughout the country it refers to a proverbial statement by Jesus that people do know how to 'read' the weather and see when rain is coming, that they do not understand the signs of the times. The bishops first give praise where praise is due. It is not an exhaustive list, but they mention food security and infra structure developments. Then they quote a text from the Second Vatican Council about joys and grief, hopes and anxieties of the people. They mention a number of issues touching on political governance like: how the government uses its majority in parliament to rush through legislation without proper debate and scrutiny and how the official speeches call for reconciliation but are not put into practice. They then mention a number of points like the lack of proper consultations on national issues, such as the flag change. Consultations are at the heart of democracy. They speak about intra-party democracy and the big man syndrome. Media and freedom of expression and the abuse of public media are mentioned. While they praise government on food security they also speak about politicizing it and asking government that food security at national level should translate into food security at the household level. The anticorruption drive comes in for some criticism and land issues pass the review expressing worries about the possibility of displacement of people. They request that the local elections be seriously prepared. The statement says that the Vice President must be given the respect due to her high office. In conclusion they say: *Wakutsina khutu ndi mnansi* ("the one who tweaks the ear is a friend") and express their wish that all will come together to usher in an era of dialogue and an ardent common search for solutions towards integral development.

Various Reactions to the Statement

The reaction to the statement was one of disbelief, agreement, praise and support from many quarters, churches, NGOs, commentators. On the part of government it was silence for six weeks. The spokesperson for the President said that government is studying the document. Rev. Billy Gama, advisor to the President on religion, is recognized by a commentator as making sense on the pastoral letter. The bishops, he is reported to have said, were only motivated by love in raising the issues. The same commentator says: “Government’s desire to undermine people’s participation in policy making, which lies at the heart of the pastoral letter, should worry us all since participation is the reason why we settled for democracy in 1993”. Both dailies and weekend newspapers come out in full support for the bishops and in the course of this they do not mince their words. Most mention that what the bishops say is nothing new and has been said by other churches and NGO’s. It is just the fact that the body of bishops said it that matters. People recall the 1992 letter: *Living our Faith* and draw comparisons.

A day after Peter Mutharika returned from his trip abroad Rev Mangisa, of the CCAP Blantyre Synod, calls a press conference and surprises the nation with his criticism of the bishops’ statement. He says that: the pastoral letter went beyond proper observance of protocol, that the issues raised should have been addressed to the President in private etc. This causes a storm in the country, but more especially so in the Blantyre Synod. Soon after rumours circulated that government was behind the press conference. The government ministries would have told journalists about it. The reaction of Blantyre Synod is one of denial of the press release and they express agreement with the Catholic bishops. Mangisa and his deputy are put under investigation and the story is still ongoing as the year ends.

Reverend Malani Mtonga, former advisor to the President on religious matters, expresses his support for the letter, as does the *Malawi Council of Churches*. The President commented on his return from one of his odysseys that the bishops have a mandate to comment on pertinent issues. But how government truly feels about the letter becomes clear when at the consecration of the bishop of the new Catholic diocese of Karonga the President does not show up, does not give notice, and does not send anyone to represent him. No one in government or the *DPP* is present. So when finally the official response from government appears, it is no surprise that it condemns the whole pastoral statement at times using clichés and terms that have no place in a modern reflection on relations between church and state, on the Bible and God. A few days later the President shocks the nation by announcing that he is not Jesus and will not turn the other cheek. He challenges the bishops to plant trees instead of writing pastoral letters. Maybe he does not know that this is already custom in the Catholic Church for more than a hundred years?

Most commentators have condemned government for its reaction. They have called it a missed chance. Some see the President’s speech at tree planting day as blasphemy. The Catholic Church has remained silent in the wake of the government criticism. Some have said the cooling of relationships is a good development, because church and state are too closely linked. It is the second time such a strong reaction has come from government side. It would be good for our politicians to look at the outcome of the first such reaction.

Maybe the words of the Apostolic Nuncio to Malawi at the occasion of the consecration of the Bishop of Karonga are the best to close with: as church we will never be partisan, but we will always take the side of the poor. We have no other option.

ECONOMY

2010/11 Malawi National Budget

The year 2010 started on a positive note with the *International Monetary Fund IMF* giving the go ahead for donors to fund Malawi, and President Bingu wa Mutharika being appointed as the Chairperson of *African Union*. However, the appointment came with a cost to Malawi government amounting to K950 million to cater for tenure of office set aside by the Malawi Finance Minister, Ken Kandodo.

The Malawi leader, President Bingu wa Mutharika did not highlight some of pertinent issues such as *Mozambique-Malawi Power Interconnection Bill* in his January Parliament's Speech entitled *Dream come true* as per public demand.

The *Malawi Justice Network MEJN* embarked on a civic education exercise on the National budget at district level to encourage citizens to participate in issues of national importance.

Notable issues included in the 2010/11 National Budget (amounting K297 billion) are the K5,000 hardship allowance for rural teachers and some scholarships funds for nurses that were suspended last year. The Finance Minister, Ken Kandodo, also announced that some parastatal organizations have been dissolved as a cost cutting mechanism. Although, the Minister of Finance conducted pre-budget consultation meetings across the nation, gathering various sectors of society for their input in the national budget formulation. Ken Kandodo also announced the desire of Malawi to have a three months import cover in his 2010/2011 national budget presentation as required by international standards. Later on in the year, the Malawi parliament also approved K920 million as an extra budget for *African Union* activities.

Nevertheless, to the dismay of many people's expectations especially the civil society organizations such as *Malawi Justice Network* and *Centre For Social Concern CFSC*, the 2010/11 budget did not include the proposition of raising non-taxable base from current K10,000.00 to K24,000.00 to face the fact the cost of living on food items is hovering around that figure. *MEJN* also lobbied for taxation of vending businesses to boost up government revenue to ably deliver one or two public service.

The World Financial Crisis, Fuel and Forex Shortages

The effects of world financial crisis were still felt in the Malawi press in the year 2010. Earlier on, during the beginning of the year the *World Bank* was impressed with how Malawi was managing the Forex and current imports cover however, the conducive environment was short lived. Fuel and Forex shortages continued to be the outcry of the day in all circles of life. People's speculations were linking fuel shortage to Forex deficits while in some quarters the link goes further to frequent external travels of the Malawi leader as *African Union* Chairperson and his large entourage. This made a rude awakening to President Bingu to establish a national advisory council that is headed by Peter Mutharika to strategically find a way to resolve these issues.

Despite the fact that Malawi government continue to receive more praise for good fiscal discipline that earned them debt cancellation in 2006, economic analysts have

urged government not to completely ignore the development projects at the expense debt avoidance. The *African Development Bank* expressed concern over Malawi's over borrowing considering the fact that it has not been so long since the country's debt was cancelled a few years ago. Malawi's external debt is pegged at K126.6 billion from K136.8 million. Meanwhile, the *Central Bank* says that Malawi's present debt is sustainable.

Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)

Malawi did not sign the interim agreement on *Economic Partnership Agreement EPAs* with the *European Union EU* in which civil society organizations like *MEJN* and *CFSC* played a critical role in persuading the Malawi government not to sign the *EPAs* in their current form.

Tobacco

2010 tobacco market season is seen as one of the best with tobacco sales mounting to K54.9 billion. *CFSC* continued to advocate for tabling and passing the tenancy labour bill so that tobacco benefits are equally felt at tenant level who live and work in dismal conditions. The sales of tobacco, Malawi's largest Forex earner, started on a lighter note in which the leaf fetched good amount of money. Other Forex earners include Uranium exports from Kayelekera in Karonga and the approval of donor fund release to Malawi by *International Monetary Fund IMF*.

The *IMF* applauded the *Reserve Bank of Malawi* for the reduction in the bank rate, cut from 15% to 13%. The reduction has a trickle down benefit to farmers, traders and the private sector. Tobacco and uranium continued to contribute to the stabilization of import cover currently pegged at 2.89 months. However, Malawi still loses \$18 billion for exporting tobacco in its raw form. Malawi's imports cover continued to go up because of Forex availability. The forecasts by the *Economic Intelligence Unit*, in London showed Forex availability and other economic and development factors that are necessitating improved imports cover. *World Health Organization*, made a recommendation to ban burley manufacturing because of additives that are used in manufacturing cigarettes. This development caused a lot panic on part of farmers and tobacco institutions which are afraid to lose their jobs and income. Up to date the experts have not found a major alternative option to this main foreign exchange earner.

African Union in Malawi

Malawi hosted *African Union Economic Summit* as a first assignment since the president Bingu wa Mutharika became the *African Union* Chairperson. The Malawi parliament approved K920 million as an extra budget for *African Union* activities.

FOOD SECURITY

ADMARC Services

During the month of January maize buyers complained over the exorbitant prices that *ADMARC* was charging its customers. It was actually more expensive than buying from vendors and consumers felt cheated by the national marketing company. It was reported that *ADMARC* was selling its maize at the price of K60 per kilogramme while vendors were selling theirs at K50 or less for a kilogramme.

Dry Spells and Pests

During the growing season, dry spell and armyworms invaded some areas. Dry spells affected districts such as Mwanza, Neno, Nsanje and Chikwawa and the result was that maize wilted which resulted in some farmers burning the affected crops. Rice production in Karonga was also affected and reduced the harvest by 20%. The President reassured Malawians that there was no cause for alarm due to the availability of relief maize amounting to 120,000 metric tones. As some areas showed promising crop stands, others had to replant their fields.

Subsidy Programme

Nowadays we cannot talk of agricultural production without mentioning subsidized fertilizer/inputs. It has its shortcomings: theft and the shortage of coupons were a tall order in the year. Coupled with it, late delivery of farm inputs. People also complained that coupon distribution period was closed too early and worse still, those who accessed these coupons could not find subsidized fertilizer. Having experienced the same problems last season, people expected an improvement. Although the government reduced the price of subsidized fertilizer from K1,000 to K500, some organizations felt the price should have gone back the previous amount. They argued that raising the price could have assisted the government to increase the number of beneficiaries. On the other hand, some experts encouraged farmers to stop using fertilizers because there is a cheaper and natural way of realizing high crop yields. To date people still buy at the price of K500 despite all price increase in other costs like administration.

Despite the call by civil society organizations, Ken Kandodo announced in the presentation of the budget, that out of the K23 billion that had been allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture, more than half of this had gone to the fertilizer subsidy programme. Some commentators suggested that Malawi should think of ways of exiting the subsidy programme. *MEJN* observed that the continued purchasing subsidised fertilizer could safely be said to be one of the reasons there is a shortage of Forex, therefore Malawi needed to do away with the importation of lots of subsidized fertilizers so that the much needed Forex remain in the country.

A lot of stories continue about the successes of manure. At present there are some people who solely depend on manure and have bumper yields every harvest. By June, all stakeholders were geared up to make sure everything was set for distribution of fertilizers taking into consideration last season's discrepancies during the exercises. By that time Members of parliament still complained that very few people accessed the coupons despite being on the list of beneficiaries. Although it the plan of the

president to have bumper yields, it should be noted that his plan on subsidy seems to have worked as of now because with good rains.

The distribution of the national farm input program for 2010/2011 season started in October and still faced with a lot of criticism from both the opposition parties and independent observers. Some observers noted that there is that the subsidy should be extended to other nutritious crops, not only maize. While the Irish government suggested that other nutritious food crops need to be on the subsidy programme, the United Kingdom's *DFID* advised Malawi to think ways of stopping the subsidy because they are not in favour of the programme.

During November the press had pictures of people, including women with babies, spending the night at an *ADMARC* depot in Balaka, waiting for their turn to buy subsidized fertilizer and seed. People also found it difficult to access the farm inputs because they are simply not available and this happened at a time when some places are ready for planting. An example was Neno where not even a single bag of fertilizer was available and yet people had coupons to buy the farm inputs.

Food Security Success Story

There was an *African Union* meeting in Lilongwe and the success story of food security featured highly on the agenda and many countries looked at Malawi with disbelief following its transformation from being a beggar to a maize exporter. President Bingu wa Mutharika pointed out that it is high time that Africa becomes a food self-reliant continent through fertilizer subsidy. While we are still talking of food security, Traditional Leaders in Balaka concerned for their subjects asked organizations to rescue some people who were facing starvation. The government had already previously announced that it had predicted a 30% shortfall in the years harvest. As for Nsanje, floods and armyworms and dry spell affected the crop.

Food Security Situation

By June, issues of hunger continued to make headlines in the press while at the same time other reports were applauding Malawi for being a food secured nation. The media disclosed that over 78,000 people had no access to food and surely needed food aid. The *Malawi Vulnerability Assessment Committee MVAC* announced there were people in the eight districts in the Southern Region that needed food aid. This was contrary to the *Famine Early Warning System Network FEWSNET* which said the figure was now at 1.1 million in the Southern Region alone. Nutrition experts also disclosed that the intake of fish among Malawians is dwindling, raising fears of high levels of malnutrition.

The cost of food is also a major component of the Basic Needs Basket that *CFSC* compile. The monthly survey on the cost of living showed that the cost of living had gone up due to rising in prices of food.

Media reports, backed by the *Southern African Development Community's SADC* findings on the food situation in recent months, showed that over one million Malawians had no food and this announcement did not please authorities especially the President who openly said he was annoyed with the report. Observers noted that it

was a tendency for the authorities to run away from the truth even if there is an evident food shortage.

Food Storage Situation

There was a lot of evidence that points to food wastage during storage. Some farmers harvest a lot and do not have enough space for storage. In this regard, authorities were sensitizing farmers to use metal silos for storing their maize and President Bingu wa Mutharika launched this type of silos in Luchenza in Thyolo District in July.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIVES

Chieftaincy

The year 2010 had its fair share of wrangles on chieftaincy. It is common nowadays to hear about a court injunction against the installation of a chief. A number of squabbles have emerged from relations of the departed chiefs who have in several instances felt they were the right people for the crown. No one seems to accept the choices that are made when a chief dies. This trend has also been happening among Chewa chiefs. While some people think these cases are now common because of the monetary benefits that are attached to the chieftaincy, others feel it is high time hereditary chieftaincy was relieved. Whatever the case such wrangles are not exemplary to the young generation and need urgent solution.

Witchcraft

Issues of witchcraft also took centre stage in the year under review. Since time immemorial no one has ever voluntarily declared that they practice witchcraft. Traditionally there are strong beliefs among Malawians that witchcraft is a hidden trade and is practiced in the most secretive manner possible. In most cases it is done at night. But in recent times a number of stories have appeared in the press with children confessing that they practice witchcraft. This has in a way exposed a hidden trade.

Evidence has shown that many old people are at risk of being called witches. In 2010 somebody took it upon themselves and held a number of women hostage over witchcraft allegations. Although human rights organizations condemned these acts, numerous reports indicate that old people are still haunted by witchcraft allegations. Meanwhile a grouping called *Association of Secular Humanism* has vowed to fight for the rights of witches. Currently there is no law against witchcraft.

In connection with witchcraft, the press also carried out some articles on private parts trade. The issue of removing people's private parts is mainly associated with witchcraft and rituals. Fresh in people's minds is the recent case of a man who was caught at Lilongwe Bus Depot who wanted to sell a friend's private parts. People still remember how the former president Dr Bakili Muluzi vowed to deal with anyone who would report on the killings that had resulted from private parts cutting. Just recently the courts in Mulanje also convicted a man in connection with private parts trading. All this is evidence that trade is continuing.

Homosexuality

Issues of homosexuality dominated the press and became a topic of discussion in Malawi during 2010. In what could be best defined as a rare case or a case of the year, Resident Magistrate Nyakwawa Usiwa condemned Tiwonge Chimbalanga and his partner Stevie Monjeza to 14 years imprisonment with hard labour for an indecent act. The two are the first gay couple in Malawi to publicly hold a traditional engagement.

The story of the two got a lot of local and international media coverage. It also raised a lot of discussion as some people and civil society groups backed the gay couple, while others were totally against them. Some countries had to intervene and ask Malawi to respect the rights of minorities such as homosexuals. It had to take the

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to convince President Bingu wa Mutharika to release the two from prison. It should be noted that a number of human rights activists had also pleaded for the release of the gay couple but their pleas fell on deaf ears. But being the country that Malawi is, many people are still of the view that homosexuality is not acceptable in Malawi where it is still illegal.

Child Abuse

Of great concern in 2010 was the rate at which parents and society are abusing children. According to the universal declaration on the rights of children a child is anyone who is below the age of 18. Press reports came up with various abuses that children have suffered. The girls have been targeted as parents force them to marry because of poverty. Some are married off at the tender age of 13. Another case is that of parents who deny their children the right to medication because of religious beliefs. This issue is still painful in people's minds because a number of children were being put at risk because of this belief. Cases of rape and defilement were also reported in the press.

Child labour is an issue that was widely reported in 2010. Although government announced that it is doing its best to liberate children from child labour, a large number is still working on estates and to add salt to the wounds they even work without protective gear. The situation is made worse because of the absence of the labour tenancy law and legal rights. After years of advocating for the tabling and passing of the tenancy labour bill, the bill is not any closer to parliament building. The fact that there are no contracts for tenants and labourers on estates puts children at a greater risk of child labour. One can only dream that the bill will one day be tabled and passed.

Still on children's issues the national assembly passed a child rights protection bill. The passing of the law at least gives hope those that abuse children will be taken to task and be punished. As the newly formed *NGO* coalition on children's rights has noted there are still some issues that need to be monitored in making sure that the law is effective.

Pension Bill

Controversy still surrounds the pension bill, which was referred back to the committees. The *Malawi Congress of Trade Unions MCTU* which is one of the main stakeholders of the bill, has not rested in trying to make sure that some of the concerns are dealt with. Among other things workers are not happy with the system that will be followed for one to get their pension proceeds. The calculations will leave people with less money than the current system. Above all the bill also states that any person will be entitled to their pension proceeds after turning 55 years of age. To date there are still issues that people still feel the bill should take care of before it is passed. According to experts government needs to consult more.

EDUCATION

University Entrance Examinations

The stalemate that came about because of the controversial quota system of selecting students into institutions of higher learning delayed the result of university selection. The issue, which even went to courts, took some time to be dealt with to the extent that those who sat for the *University Entrance Examinations* lost hope. The quota system introduction seemed to have caused problems in some quarters. Some decades ago the system was challenged by students who felt it was unfair to stop well deserving students from going to college. But the high courts finally ruled in favour of those that were for the system. Government introduced the quota system, which it calls equitable access to education, to make sure that almost each district in the country has equal chances of sending students to public universities.

The Quota System

Even the introduction of quota system is not good enough to solve the problem of shortage of places at public universities. Every school year there are thousands of students that have the right grades but have no chance of pursuing their careers because there are only a few places at universities. At the opening of the 2010/2011 national budget-meeting president Bingu wa Mutharika announced that his government would build five new universities across the nation. While some quarters welcomed the development others still feel there is a lot that needs to be done in the running of the existing colleges.

Student Allowances and Loans

Not too long ago the press disclosed that students at *University of Mzuzu* were learning while standing because of shortage of chairs and desks at the college. Students at some colleges have on several occasions held strikes for delays by authorities in distributing book allowances. Similarly the press in 2010 carried an announcement asking the former students to pay back government loans. It was announced that the former *UNIMA* graduates owe the government K850 million. Just to make sure that the loans are paid back the *Public Universities Students Loan Trust* were asked to recover the money.

Malawi Schools Certificate of Education

Issues of education standards and the *Malawi Schools Certificate of Education MSCE* Examinations continued to receive massive press coverage. Although there were complaints over the change in the school calendar, the *MSCE* results for the year 2010 were an improvement compared to the previous year. In 2009 45.20% passed their examinations while in 2010 it was 53.35%. This shows that at least there is some hope that students are striving to pass their examinations. But, on the other hand, the 2010 examinations are said to have had more incidents of cheating than last year.

Private Schools

Talk of school fees in private schools also took centre stage in 2010. A number of parents and guardians have complained of the exorbitant fees that some private

schools charge. Evidence has shown that private school owners are well known for increasing school fees anyhow. Despite some schools having bad structures, they still charge exorbitant fees leaving parents with no choice but pay them. Although some parents have complained about this tendency, the *Private Schools Association of Malawi PRISAM* said it has no mandate to regulate school fees.

One-way of improving education standards the Ministry of Education continued with the school inspection programme. A number of schools were closed for having poor structure and a lack of qualified teachers. This exercise had its own problems because it left many students stranded with no school to attend to for some time. Others had to travel long distances just to be in school. Despite the drawbacks it gave some school owners the push to renovate their schools.

Hardship Allowance

The 2010/2011 Budget sitting of the National Assembly gave teachers in the rural areas hope that there is going to be an allowance to motivate them to continue teaching in remote areas. Finance Minister Ken Kandodo announced that the K5,000.00 hardship allowances would be given to teachers in the rural areas. Just when people thought that this would be done immediately, there were reports of problems that arose and months after the announcement teachers in rural areas have not received their allowances.

As if the delay is not enough the allowance issue has opened a new can of worms among the teachers. Those that are teaching in the urban areas feel by targeting rural teachers only, government is not being fair. The argument is that there is also a lot of work in the urban areas because enrolment is higher than in rural areas. At the same time there were also other reports that disclosed that not all teachers in rural areas are entitled to the allowance. There is going to be a demarcation. Those living at trading centres will not receive the hardship allowances. As 2010 comes to an end the teachers only pray that government will fulfil its promise because parliament approved the hardship allowances.

Salary Delays

Although the issue of money causes knots in peoples' stomachs, one cannot run away from the fact that it also plays a major role as a motivating factor. Therefore any delays in salaries frustrate people. Every now and then teachers in government schools have their salaries delayed. On several occasion teachers have had to wait for close to one and a half months to receive their salaries. Surprisingly this problem has been going on for a very long time and one wonders why this cannot be solved once and for all.

HEALTH

Zomba State House

During the year 2010 Malawians heard President Bingu wa Mutharika announcing that Zomba State House would become a referral hospital for diseases that have in the past been dealt with in South Africa, the United Kingdom and Germany. The Chancellor of the Republic of Germany Angella Merkel promised assistance in the project during Mutharika's visit to that country. Until now Malawi sends her patients suffering from complicated cancer, tumours and other serious diseases mainly to South Africa. The late Dr Kamuzu Banda, who was Malawi's first President, and noted politician Aleke Banda died in South Africa while being treated in referral hospitals. It is therefore a welcome development if plans to turn Zomba State House into a state-of-the-art hospital become a reality. President Bingu wa Mutharika said the referral hospital would also assist other countries such as Zambia, Tanzania and Mozambique which take their patients to South Africa.

Measles Outbreak and Vaccinations

Although malaria remains Malawi's top killer disease, measles has this year been particularly severe claiming the lives of nearly 200 children in a number of areas. In Dowa District alone some 19 lives were lost not because there wasn't any medication, but sadly because church elders of Zion Church barred their children from receiving medical attention. The situation became so serious that the Police arrested the church's bishop and three elders. These church elders had hidden the deceased at a confined place in Chitanje village so that they could not get medical treatment.

A similar case occurred in Mulanje District where 80 members of the Seventh Day Apostolic Faith had trekked from Kasungu to Zomba and ended camping at a private school in Mulanje. According to Village Headman Namaona these people had cheated him that they were on an evangelical mission but in fact they were running away from getting medical treatment for cholera in Kasungu for some of their members and in Zomba they did not want to be immunized.

The situation at Dedza District Hospital was different because 152 Zionist children were actually vaccinated at gunpoint after their fathers had fled into the forest for fear of being arrested by the police after barring their children from being vaccinated against measles. They were members of Zion Church and came from Mzinga and Kalowe villages.

Phalombe District no Hospital

As the year 2010 draws to the end Phalombe District still has no district hospital despite having a population of 313,129 people. Sick people depend on the Holy Family Mission Hospital which is run by the Catholic Church. For patients to get free treatment they must first obtain reference letters from the district health centre. The patients have to travel long distances to and from the health centre and the Mission Hospital which add to their suffering and some die on their way.

Problems at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital

During the year 2010 the oldest referral hospital in the country *Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital QECH* in Blantyre has experienced a couple of huge but preventable problems. First there was a strike by nurses, particularly in Gogo Chatinga maternity wing, where expectant women were forced to deliver on their own because authorities had decided to cut locum allowances in half. The allocated sum of K60,392,431 for locum allowances had been depleted leaving a balance of K10,203,568 to take them for four months until the next fiscal year. Expectant women need all the attention from medical staff and any misunderstandings should be quickly resolved.

Another problem that hit *QECH* was a blackout lasting several days, forcing medical staff to do their work under candlelight. Delivery of health services to patients is a noble job that requires patience, kindness and diligence. It is inconsiderate of *Electricity Supply Commission* to overlook their responsibility to correct the fault quickly.

Infant Mortality

While Malawi is making strides to realize some of *Millennium Development Goals*, including reducing maternal and infant mortality, the number of women and children who are dying calls for more effort from all stakeholders. It has been found that nearly 56,000 children below the age of five still die every year in Malawi and that nearly a third of these deaths (17,000) are of newborns that die in the first month of life. Still more 4,624 women die every year and 13 women die daily due to pregnancy-related complications. Every death is a serious matter but becomes more worrisome when preventable situations are not being corrected.

Traditional Birth Attendants

Controversy arose earlier in the year under review when the Malawi Government banned the services of *Traditional Birth Attendants TBAs* in the country only to call them back later. The government said the *TBAs* were not trained personnel hence they should not be allowed to help with delivering babies in the villages. But on his return from an overseas trip President Bingu wa Mutharika reversed the decision and said the *TBAs* should be retained and supported. This has not gone well with the *Association of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in Malawi* which argues that the policy reversal will be detrimental to the progress of reducing maternal complications. But the *National Organisation of Nurses and Midwives in Malawi NONM*, through its executive director Dorothy Ngoma, has backed President Bingu's decision saying *TBAs* offer a critical service to pregnant women in the absence of accessible health institutions.

HIV/Aids

During the year 2010 HIV/Aids pandemic was not eradicated but has only been slightly tamed. It seems the introduction of *ARVs* and relentless publicity in print and electronic media has helped to reach many people who are HIV positive to come in the open and declare their status. Few years ago it was rare for people to do so. Another huge step in lessening the strength of the virus can be realized if people can

be convinced to come in the open for voluntary testing. It cannot be denied that stigma and discrimination are still prevalent across all classes.

ENVIRONMENT

Environment and Climate Change

The yearly 5th June world environmental day summit occurred in Rwanda. Malawi will host it in 2011. The Malawian press coverage of environmental issues has become better but there is still a lot of space for improvement. For instance in December 2010 no Malawian journalist went to Cancun to cover the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* where a Global Fund for Climate Change was established. The Government of Malawi banned some years ago some chemicals used in the tobacco industry because they deplete the ozone layer.

The *UN* environment programme *UNEP* commended Malawi for its effort to prevent the ozone layer destruction. *SADC* has decided to ban more effectively all illegal environmental products. For instance to confiscate all second hand fridges and air conditioners with gas that depletes the ozone layer that protects us from ultra violet rays. According to *UN* international organization concerning climate change there are only 14 countries more vulnerable than Malawi. Three factors put Malawi in climate danger: Malawi's economy depends on agriculture that is susceptible to climate variation; its population density; and level of poverty are high.

The government of Malawi has warned the population that climate change could jeopardize development gains. Everybody should contribute in fighting it. There is change of rainfall pattern. Dry spells and floods are expected each year in some areas. To deal with dry spells one should plant early and use crop types that mature quickly.

In March over a thousand houses collapsed in Dedza because of heavy rains while in Mwanza there was not enough rain. In Blantyre city and other districts there are more water shortage problems. They used to be mainly in September and October but now they begin earlier in July. Floods are not only dangers but also opportunities: they can be used for irrigation of rice or other crops.

Climate change affects more women than men for instance by lengthening the distance to get firewood, water and food. In case of crisis women are the first ones to face children and explain them why these items are missing. Religious groups have started to fight climate change in Malawi. Japan has given MK 3 billion to Malawi to deal with climate change. Nevertheless despite their promises developed countries fail to fund poorer ones to prevent climate change and adapt to it.

Deforestation

Deforestation continues and worsens climate change. This is very visible around Blantyre. Also vast chunks of Mulanje Mountain vegetation have been destroyed by fire. This can dissuade tourists to come and bring some Forex. Also rare species such as Mulanje Cedars risk extinction. Charcoal makers and mice hunters are suspected of having started the fire. Mulanje Mountain needs more protection.

Although charcoal making is illegal, firewood and charcoal are the main fuel of the majority of Malawian households. Forty three percent of town dwellers use charcoal for cooking. Sometimes police officers confiscate charcoal only to sell it later. Otherwise how can a lorry full of charcoal pass roadblocks? Electrification has not yet

reached many parts of the country, not even some towns. It prevents Malawi from reaching its environmental *Millennium Development Goal*.

In the National Budget Minister of Finance Ken Kandodo, raised the price of firewood cubic meter from MK1,500 to MK10,000 to feed the Forestry Management Fund and so stop the depletion of forests. This price is still on the lower side compared with other countries of the *SADC* region. In recent years rivers have changed their course because of tree cutting on the riverbanks. To fight this some schools pupils have exercised reforestation of riverbanks in Lilongwe. Too many riverbanks are deforested and that stops irrigation systems to work properly. The *Ministry of Water Development and Irrigation* wants to declare all lands within 20 kms from river as protected areas. In Nkhata Bay district jobless people cut many rubber trees as a coping mechanism. During the national forestry season people are encouraged to plant trees. It lasts the whole rainy season. There is a shortage of tree seedlings in some parts of the country. For instance in Thyolo districts some villages have developed a forest for their needs in wood and land conservation.

Pollution

In Lilongwe a dumping site contains remnants of food where some very poor people get their subsistence. It is also a source of pollution for the neighbours and nearby streams despite laws meant against this danger. City Assembly officials fail to insure the collect of waste and so some people throw them in rivers that become much polluted. In townships too many broken sewer pipes pollute rivers. Some NGO's helped to clean from wastes and plastics the Mudi River in Blantyre.

Wildlife

In Mangochi some workshops have been conducted to facilitate the coexistence between big animals such as elephants and people. The majority of people in that district are for the relocation of the elephants to somewhere else to protect their crops despite a minority who object to it. The dwindling number of fish in Lake Malawi could be attributed to increasing noise and bad fishing practices. Fish breeding season is illegal time for fishing. Catching even small fish depletes the lake fish resource.

In earthquake sensitive Karonga District Kayelekera uranium mine could severely pollute the lake if proper safety measures are not taken. Another type of mine a quarry in Chiradzulu has dried up a river denying people access to water. Also explosions disturb with noise people living nearby, cover the crops with dust and multiply respiratory diseases. Mineral research might begin in Lengwe natural reserve, Chikhwawa District. It would interfere with natural life there and this calls for government mediation. Chipoka and Kanyika are also prospective mining areas and will need proper supervision.

In December 2009 in Karonga for the first time ever an earthquake has killed three people, wounded many others and damaged properties such as rice fields. It has left thousands of people struggling to rebuild their houses.

GENDER

Vice President Mrs Joyce Banda

A number of women activists and other civil society organizations have learnt with great shock the firing of Vice President Mrs Joyce Banda from the ruling *Democratic Progressive Party DPP*. President Bingu wa Mutharika was praised for making a unilateral decision in choosing Mrs Banda as his running mate during the 2009 general elections. His promise to put more women in decision-making positions seemed to have been on the right track. Now all efforts he has made will not be appreciated because of the way the Mutharika government has handled and crippled the Veep and her office. One wonders why the Mutharika administration promotes women into such positions only to make them toothless so that they cannot even make the so-called decisions. As some observers noted Mutharika needs to put women who can perform and make decisions.

Gender Issues

Gender issues in the year under review dwelled on the representation of women in various sections of the society. For instant reports show that women are under represented in the media. Evidence has shown that not too many women are quoted in the media. By not quoting many women it is silently saying that women do not make news. Early this year, newspapers came up with newsmakers for a particular month and they were all men. This raised a lot of questions as to why women are not on the list of newsmakers.

Similarly a report on the representation of women in the media industry disclosed that a few women work in the newsroom. Despite gaining training in journalism most women end up in public relations jobs. Observers noted that this is the case because of the odd hours that newsroom work demands.

Gender-based Violence

Cases of women battering and other forms of gender-based violence formed daily part of the press coverage in the year 2010. A woman in Ntcheu passed away at the hands of her uncle whom she had condemned for cutting down a tree. The uncle beat the woman severely and she later died in hospital. A number of cases were also reported in the press in 2010. Surprisingly evidence has shown that while a number of women have reported gender based violence cases to authorities some cases have still gone unreported.

In some cases the same women that reported gender-based violence to the police went back begging the law enforcers to release their husbands. Former minister of gender Patricia Kaliati lashed out at the women for shielding the same men that physically and emotionally abuse their spouses. There is a tendency among married women to protect their husbands especially when there are abuses in the homes. According to Kaliati this trend cannot advance the fight for a domestic violence free nation.

The 50-50 Campaign

Just like in the 2009 presidential and parliamentary elections, *non-governmental organizations* worked tirelessly to make sure that they achieve their goals of making 50% of female representation in the National Assembly. Though the representation of women in parliament is still below 50%, there was indeed an improvement in the 2009 elections compared to 2004. The *NGOs*, led by the *NGO Gender Coordinating Network NGO GCN*, did a good job. Against this background people expected the same pace that the *NGOs* took would also be followed as the nation prepares for the local government elections. Malawians have stayed for more than a decade without councillors. Now the long awaited local government elections are almost around the corner but there seems to be less coherence between the *NGOs* and the gender ministry over the 50-50 campaigns.

The press revealed that there were major misunderstandings over the 50-50 campaigns between the gender *NGOs* and the ministry of gender. The *NGOs* are bitter because they feel the ministry stole their ideas by running the same campaign. There were also concerns that because the ministry is heading the 50-50 campaign, the promotion is going to be politicized. But other observers have disclosed that the squabbles between the two sides are not healthy for the campaign. It also sends wrong signals to the donors who are bankrolling the campaign. Others have noted that the two stakeholders should work together so that they achieve their goals.

16 Days of Gender Activism

As is the tradition the nation commemorated *16 Days of Gender Activism* from 25 November to December 10th. Although the Malawi National Assembly passed the *Domestic Violence Bill* a few years ago, reports of violence against women and children are a common occurrence in Malawi. As experts have noted Malawi does not only need 16 days to abstain from violence against women. Malawi needs to be a violent free nation, as this would reflect well with the fact that Malawi is a God fearing nation. But as some people have noted the many reports of human rights abuses against women does verify this assumption.

Decade of African Women

As Chairperson of the *African Union AU* president Bingu wa Mutharika launched *Decade of African Women* at Nairobi in Kenya. Speaking at the launch Mutharika observed that it is now time to implement some of the declarations that member states of the *AU* have signed. It has been a trend for countries to sign declarations but it has not been easy to implement them. Mutharika advised countries to look into the declarations and implement what the counties committed by signing such documents. An example is that of Malawi where a declaration on gender and development was signed recently. As many people applauded government for signing the declaration, the nation still needs to do more of action towards gender and development in order to fulfil the pledges made.

Catholic Bishops' Letter of 31 October 2010 and the Government Response	
Reading the Signs of the Times: Socio-Political and Economic Issues in Malawi	The Government of Malawi response to Bishops Pastoral Letter ¹
Preamble	
<p>We, Catholic Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi, after a week of prayerful reflection and interaction among ourselves and with our various Commissions, present this special message to the nation.</p> <p>We do so because we believe that now is the opportune time to directly engage Malawians into an honest discussion about the future of our beloved country. Like the prophet Ezekiel of old, ever conscious of our prophetic role, we are touched by the Word of God: <i>“Son of Man, I have appointed you as watchman to the House of Israel, when you hear a word from my mouth, warn them in my name.”</i> (Ezekiel 33:7)</p> <p>The Church has a longstanding tradition starting from our Lord Jesus Christ of Reading and interpreting the signs of the times. In this line Jesus said: <i>“When you see a cloud rising in the west you say immediately that it is going to rain – and so it does; and when you notice that the wind blowing from the south you say that it is going to be hot – and so it is. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know interpret the present times?”</i> (Lk. 12:54-56)</p> <p>It is this reading and interpreting of the signs of the times that has led us to produce this statement convinced, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, that <i>“the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, ... are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well”</i> (Gaudium et Spes, paragraph 1).</p>	<p>The Government of the Republic of Malawi, led by Ngwazi Professor Bingu wa Mutharika, is a caring government and, guided by its constitutional obligation to develop our country, hereby responds to the Pastoral Statement issued by the Catholic Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi entitled <i>Reading the Signs of the Times: Socio-Political and Economic Issues in Malawi</i> dated 31st October 2010.</p> <p>The government has taken note of the Catholic Bishops' view to “appreciate what God is doing in our midst and then also challenging the nation, ourselves inclusive, to greater heights by focusing on the grief and anguish of people today”.</p> <p>The Government of the Republic of Malawi recognises the role that Catholic Bishops and other religious leaders play in the socio-economic development of our country. In that regard, the government considers the Catholic Bishops and the rest of the faith community as genuine partners in development and not as adversaries.</p> <p>The government highly respects the position and status of the Catholic Bishops in our society. However, it is compelled to correct a number of factual inaccuracies contained in the Pastoral Statement that it believes were based on inadequate research.</p> <p>Government is at pains to understand what motivated the Catholic Bishops to attack the State President and his government on matters ranging from good governance, the state of democracy, politicisation of food security, as well as</p>

¹ As reproduced in “The Nation” Tuesday, 14 December 2010 10:34 at http://www.nationmw.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11061:govts-response-to-bishops-pastoral-letter&catid=1:national-news&Itemid=3

	the alleged “infliction of pain and grief” to people by the DPP government.
1. The Joys and Hopes	
<p>We have every reason for the strides that have been made in the development of this country in recent years.</p> <p>We congratulate the Government for prioritizing issues of Food Security. The current efforts to move Malawi from a rain – dependent agriculture country to one that relies also on irrigation are commendable plains and drainage patterns of our lakes and rivers shall in the long run, help to enhance food security as well as the social – economic development of most rural Malawians.</p> <p>We applaud the Government for such important initiatives to uplift poor Malawians from poverty. These programmes coupled with favourable rains and the spirit of hard work instilled by the national level. We note with satisfaction the infrastructure development that has taken place in the country especially in the improvement of the road network.</p> <p>We follow with keen interest the possible opening of a water rout to the sea through the Nsanje inland port and applaud the Government for plans to rehabilitate the rail network. The promised five new university intake are development in the right direction with regard to giving opportunities for tertiary education to all qualifying students.</p> <p>We are particularly glad that the Government has been able to fund some of this development projects using money generated within this country rather than relying on donor funds always.</p>	<p>The government acknowledges that the Catholic Bishops do recognise the important and forward-looking policies of the DPP government and that these have resulted in positive development beneficial to all people in our country.</p> <p>In order to amplify this, government invites the Catholic Bishops to acknowledge the following achievements:</p> <p>Firstly, on food security, the government has done extremely well. Malawians recall that five years ago, some people in our country used to starve throughout the year due to lack of food in the past. It is a fact that people used to eat raw mangoes and wild roots, and that some used to die on Admarc lines waiting to buy maize. The government has transformed Malawi into a food-secure nation in a very short period of time.</p> <p>Secondly, the government has been implementing a well formulated ‘Malawi Growth and Development Strategy’ for poverty reduction that has been hailed as one of the most focused among African countries. This has had positive impact on the economy.</p> <p>Thirdly, many people in both urban and rural areas have now access to safe drinking water. Everywhere there are more boreholes than ever before. Malawi is, in fact, the envy of many other sub-Saharan countries.</p> <p>Fourthly, Malawi has successfully reduced the number of people who died from HIV/Aids. Even the Catholic Bishops might recall that this country used to have so many funerals every day of people dying of Aids. The number of such deaths has now drastically reduced.</p> <p>Fifthly, the mortality rate of children has reduced from 225 per 1,000 births in 1990 to around 50 in 2010. Similarly, the number of women dying while giving birth has now significantly reduced. Safe motherhood is now deep-rooted and women giving birth are safer today than</p>

	<p>ever before.</p> <p>Sixthly, the economy has consistently grown by at least 7.6% annually since 2004, despite the global economic meltdown, and Malawi has been rated as one of the best managed economies in Africa. Consequently, the number of the extreme poor below the United Nations “poverty line” has significantly reduced between 2004 and 2010.</p> <p>These are just a few examples of the successes that have been achieved by this government. Government believes that if this information was made available to the Catholic Bishops without distortions, they would not have failed to appreciate the positive attributes of the DPP government.</p>
2. The Grief and Anguish	
<p>In order to sustain the above positive developments, we need to pay attention to areas that in our day are slowly but firmly becoming ‘the grief and anguish’ of the people of Malawi.</p> <p>When we emerged from the 2009 elections, our hopes were high for peace, stability and development for all. Somewhat more than a year later our hopes are slowly fading away. The majority the ruling party enjoys in parliament was meant to facilitate Government business and progress but unfortunately it has bred a spirit of overconfidence on the one part of the Government.</p> <p>While Malawians recall with bad memories the era when the opportunity was in majority, they are slowly waking up to the downside of a government that has majority power as well. Both sides have used their pursuing the common good through the professed development and reconciliation agenda.</p> <p>We are often surprised that in official political speeches the ideal democracy is put before us while the actual practice of politics on the ground does not always reflect what is preached on podiums. It is in this context that we, your pastors, in sincerity, humbly express the following</p>	<p>Government does not agree with the observation in the Pastoral Statement that the positive political and socio-economic development in Malawi are slowly but firmly becoming “the grief and anguish” of the people of Malawi.</p> <p>Furthermore, the government disagrees with the Pastoral Statement that the DPP majority in Parliament has bred a spirit of overconfidence rather than facilitation of government business. Neither does the government agree that it is using its majority to “inflict pain and vengeance on the opposition rather than development and reconciliation”.</p> <p>The government is concerned that the Pastoral Statement makes a serious accusation that the Head of State and Government of our country preaches democracy on podiums, but does not practice it on the ground. This statement has crossed the bounds of protocol and respect that the Head of State deserved. The government, therefore, demands that the Catholic Bishops substantiate this strong accusation.</p> <p>The government would like to categorically reaffirm that the State President has always defined democracy as “a system of governance where the decisions of the majority are carried out</p>

<p>concerns.</p>	<p>while safeguarding the legitimate interest of the minority”. In that regard, he has tolerated opposing views at all times in the past.</p> <p>The Malawi nation is puzzled that the Catholic Bishops seem to mirror accusations made by the opposition without appreciating what the DPP government has achieved. The government wishes to remind the Catholic Bishops how the UDF/MCP often used their majority in Parliament to derail national projects, including water, so much needed by our people.</p> <p>Government wants to reassure the Catholic Bishops that the DPP has never abused its members in Parliament to force passage of legislation in the House.</p> <p>Therefore, what is now happening in Malawi parliament also happens in similar situations in Africa, South East Asia, Latin America, United States of America and Western Europe.</p> <p>The government also wishes to draw attention of the Catholic Bishops to an important fact that is often ignored by the opposition that since Professor Bingu wa Mutharika took power in 2004, there have been no political prisoners or detainees in Malawi prisons.</p> <p>This is in direct contrast with the UDF government that arrested Sheikh Bugdad (later died in prison), the Rev. Kalele, Dr. Hetherwick Ntaba, Gwanda Chakuamba, John Tembo, Mama Kadzamira and even the former State President, Ngwazi Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, to name only a few.</p> <p>The attention of the Catholic Bishops is also drawn to the fact of history that in attempt to consolidate its position, the previous UDF government removed the Senate and the Recall Provision from the Constitution. The UDF government also used its majority to amend the Constitution to establish the Office of the Second Vice-President.</p> <p>The Catholic Bishops should also recall that throughout its existence the MCP government never allowed any opposition</p>
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	to voice opinion either as individuals or as political parties. In fact, the late Archbishop James Chiona was arrested in 1977 for voicing an opinion contradicting the government. Similarly, the Catholic Bishops were also arrested following the Pastoral Letter of 1992.
2.1 Lack of Proper Consultation on National Issues	
<p>We note with concerns the manner in which consultations on issues of national interest are being carried out.</p> <p>Much as the Government has a right to propose changes on areas of national importance, proper consultation are imperative if the resulting decision is to be upheld as representing the will of the majority and common good. The consultation that we have recently seen, on such important issues as bill No. 13 of 2009: Constitution amendments (Marriage age); Bill No. 14 of 2009: Police; Bill No. 2 of 2010: Local Government elections (Amendments); Bill No. 10 of 2010: Protected flags, emblems and names (Amendment); Bill No. 14 of 2010 Pension, leave a lot to be desired.</p> <p>Consultations must give room to contrary opinions and allow for debate and dialogue. If this is not done, it leads to discontent and can also lead to conflict. If contrary opinions lead to intimidation of individuals or institutions, the dialogue that is required between all stakeholders in a democracy fails. Changes that are introduced without listening to the legitimate wishes of the people, have the potential of delinking and alienating an otherwise good Government from the very people it serves.</p>	<p>The Catholic Bishops have noted “with concern the manner in which consultations on issues of national interest are being carried”. This has always been the opposition “litany” of where they claim government made decisions without consultations.</p> <p>Government would like to put the record straight that the specific bills mentioned in the Pastoral Letter went through lengthy and extensive consultations.</p> <p>The government wishes to clarify that the Constitution Amendment Bill No. 13 of 2009 (so called Marriage Bill by the Bishops) was discussed and agreed to by two separate law commissions that included the clergy, academics, judges and prominent lawyers.</p> <p>It should also be put on record that even after its passage in Parliament, the President did not assent to the Bill, not because of lack of consultations, but because of the public outcry against the proposed marriage age of 16 instead of 15 contained in the Constitution.</p> <p>All evidence shows that there were adequate consultations with regard to all other bills mentioned in the Pastoral Statement, the relevant ministries consulted specific stakeholders.</p> <p>The bills were thoroughly discussed in Cabinet after which they were gazetted and sent to Parliament for debate.</p> <p>During this and any other stages, all MPs were expected to consult their constituencies. In fact, NGOs, religious leaders together with other stakeholders gave their input that was fully taken into account.</p> <p>The government wishes to inform the Catholic Bishops that Pension Bill has not</p>

	<p>yet been passed in Parliament and consultations are still going on. It is, therefore, surprising that the Pastoral Statement accuses the government on a Bill whose process has not been finalised. The Local Government Act Amendment was made to remove the ambiguity that existed. It allows the President to consult with the Electoral Commission and set a date for local polls. Consultations were made before the Bill was enacted.</p> <p>The Catholic Bishops no doubt know that even in the UK, the Prime Minister alone decides when to call for general elections at any time. That power so vested in the Prime Minister does not weaken the British democracy. Similarly, here in Malawi, the Bill does not give too much power to the President as is suggested and does not dilute our democracy.</p>
2.2 Intra-Party Democracy	
<p>As we said our previous letter <i>‘Taking Responsibility for our Future’</i> (2008, par.2.1.1) within political parties, the party constitution and the leaders must provide ways and means to make it possible for all members to participate fully and give aspirants the opportunity to freely contest for key positions.</p> <p>Some of the consequences of not paying attention to these elements are: dictatorial tendencies in party leaders and those who surround them, disgruntled party members, functionalism in parties, and break up of parties. Our conviction is that it is within the political party that democracy starts; it is also here that it starts to fail! The symptoms of this failure are seen when parties give in to the big-man syndrome; when young new blood is not allowed to enter into political leadership.</p> <p>We call upon all political parties to uphold principles of constitutionalism and tolerance within the parties.</p>	<p>Government feels that the Pastoral Statement was not based on proper knowledge or adequate research of how the DPP functions. The DPP Constitution provides that any bonafide member can aspire for any position at any level. This includes any aspirants for the 2014 General Elections.</p> <p>The DPP convention intended to select a candidate for the 2014 has not yet been held. Therefore, there is no basis to fault the party’s democratic structures in this regard.</p>
2.3 The Media and Freedom of Expression	
<p>Informed decisions are made by an informed public. The public media, paid with taxpayers’ money, have to ensure that the general public remains informed.</p>	<p>The government welcomes the exhortation that the public and private media, including faith-based organisations and non-governmental</p>

<p>However we note with dismay the continuous unbalanced reporting and news coverage.</p> <p>The public media are used to castigate faith-based and non-governmental organizations that offer alternative contributions to various policies. Besides that the private media have been threatened with closure if they are perceived to be ‘unpatriotic’.</p> <p>Both private and public media should play a crucial role in promoting a vibrant, well-informed and critical society. This of course also asks from the same media, faith-based organisations and non-governmental organisations that their motivation should always be to contribute to the good of the nation.</p> <p>Their interest should always be the promotion of the common good including safeguarding the rule of law, good governance, reconciliation, justice and peace.</p>	<p>organisations should always endeavour to contribute towards the safeguarding of the rule of law, good governance, reconciliation, justice and peace in our nation. It is hoped that all those concerned would adhere to this sound advice.</p> <p>However, government does not share the views of the Catholic Bishops that the public media is used to “castigate faith-based and non-governmental organisations that offer alternative contributions to various policies”.</p> <p>The MBC is obliged to explain and clarify falsehoods and distortions by other media houses. Government would welcome any concrete evidence where genuine alternative policies that were given by the other media houses were denied access to MBC.</p> <p>Malawi is one of the few countries in sub-Saharan Africa where there is unprecedented media freedom. For instance, individuals, politicians and even the clergy have been free to criticise the State President and government without reprisals.</p> <p>Many private radio stations and newspapers are free to express their views on any subject. In fact, Zodiak, Capital FM, Malawi Institute of Journalism (MIJ) Radio, Joy Radio and other community radio stations enjoy editorial independence without government interference.</p> <p>Government, therefore, invites the Catholic Bishops to maintain a fair balance between government and the opposition in their assessment of national issues.</p> <p>They should be wary of the fact that when the public media criticises the private sector, NGOs, clergy, the journalists, all in unison, claim that the government is suppressing their freedom of expression. Similarly, when an individual has a moral courage to stand up for the truth in support of the government, that individual is said to have been bought.</p> <p>On the other hand, when the private</p>
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	<p>media castigates and is openly rude to the President and his government, as is often the case, this is considered democracy and press freedom par excellence. Where is fairness and justice in such cases?</p>
<p>2.4 Politicising Food Security Issues</p>	
<p>While the government is constantly assured the nation that there is enough maize for the country and this year there are indications that we have yet another food surplus, this assurance and the national projected figures have to be translated into food security at household level throughout the country. Though there is enough food in the country, we do not understand why people in areas where harvest failed due to poor rains were not immediately assisted by the Government.</p> <p>We urge the Government to intensify its assistance in these areas. Furthermore, the national food surplus we have enjoyed over the last five years will be meaningful to the extent that issues of household food security and the distribution of food to the most vulnerable are addressed adequately.</p>	<p>Government is puzzled that the Catholic Bishops would entertain the notion that government is “politicising food security issue”.</p> <p>The President has always pointed out that for various reasons, such as local drought, laziness and illness, there are incidents and pockets of hunger.</p> <p>There is evidence to show that government has always responded expeditiously and adequately to these pockets of hunger in our country.</p> <p>The Department of Disaster Management also works hand-in-hand with interested NGOs and Church groups to provide assistance to the affected households, regardless of political affiliations or region.</p>
<p>2.5 Anti-Corruption Drive</p>	
<p>We see corruption as an evil which must be eradicated from our society. It is usually the poor who suffer most its consequences. So we do need anti-corruption drive that tackles corruption at all levels.</p> <p>Currently the anti-corruption drive is interpreted by the public as driven by the state’s desire to silence and push into submission people who seem to be politically ambitious or critical of some Government decisions.</p> <p>We call upon the Government to ensure that the Anti-Corruption Bureau acts independently and is giving enough resources to start and conclude cases speedily. We urge all stakeholders and citizens to resist corruption and to contribute to its eradication.</p>	<p>Government welcomes the Catholic Bishops’ stand that “corruption is an evil that must be eradicated from our society”.</p> <p>The State President has preached this message at SADC, the African Union, the G20 Summits and the United Nations General Assembly.</p> <p>However, government is not aware of anyone who has been “silenced or pushed into submission” by deliberate false charges or corruption. Government hopes that their Lordships would be kind enough to formulate concrete and implementable measures to assist government to successfully combat corruption in our country.</p>

2.6 Land Issues

Land is an important asset in Malawi as it is the source of livelihood and the social-economic development of people. While we acknowledge with happiness the growing infrastructure development in our country and the greenbelt initiative, we note that in some cases, such developments can have the downside of displacing people unduly and thereby creating misery to the very people they are supposed to serve.

We implore authority to make sure that development projects should be carefully weighed against the livelihoods of both the dialogue with the affected people.

Displaced of people due to intend infrastructure development, if not handled properly, will create misery and entrench poverty of already poor people. Furthermore, we recommend that in cases where people are relocated, the Government should ensure that people are properly assisted to settled down.

Above all, we argue the government to ensure that the nation has full information on the nature and the purpose of Greenbelt Initiative.

We call for a dialogue between all relevant stakeholders to review criteria and currently used in the acquisition of land.

Government appreciates that the Catholic Bishops have openly come out to support government's position that "land is an important asset in Malawi" and that it is a source of all socio-economic development of our country.

Government does not, however, share the Catholic Bishops claim that there is "the downside of displacing people unduly and thereby creating misery to the very people they are supposed to serve".

The true facts are as follows: Roads, schools, hospitals, ports, airports and other public infrastructure must be developed if our country is to develop.

Government has always been careful not to displace people needlessly. People are relocated to other areas only after thorough consultations with chiefs and their subjects. Compensation has always been paid in all cases of relocation or resettlement.

The relevant government ministries have records of all people who have been displaced and received compensations.

Government has up to now not received complaints of improper displacement from any group to justify this observation by the Bishops.

In the case of the Green Belt Initiative, this is the best thing that could ever happen to our country. Government assures the Catholic Bishops that this project will create thousands of jobs, new investment opportunities in irrigation, equipment, tractors, tubes and piping, schools, hospitals, housing and roads. When implemented, Malawi will never be the same again.

Presently, government is designing the Green Belt in such a way that communities will benefit directly from the project and is ready to seek the views of all people in Malawi, including those of the Catholic Bishops on how to protect the interest of those concerned.

2.7 Local Government Elections	
<p>In order to ‘take democracy home’ there is need for functional and effective local governance structures and systems. While the local elections have finally been set for April 2011, we sadly note that there is lack of clear information about resources, equipment and personnel to affect various electoral processes.</p> <p>Subsequently major stakeholders in the electoral processes like political parties, civil society and faith-based organisations are affected negatively. This situation has further been, complicated by the recent amendment of the Local Government Act effectively giving powers to the president and the Electoral Commission to decide on the local government elections date, rather than making it a constitutional obligation.</p>	<p>Government takes note that the Catholic Bishops have been misinformed and have repeated the position of the opposition that the Local Government Act gives more powers to the President and the Electoral Commission to decide the date for Local Government Elections.</p> <p>The Catholic Bishops have said that they “sadly note that there is lack of clear information about resources, equipment, and personnel to effect various electoral processes”.</p> <p>The truth of the matter is that the budget has been allocated towards Local Government Elections to be held on 20th April 2011.</p> <p>In addition, the Malawi Electoral Commission has elaborately detailed the electoral calendar for the activities prior to holding such elections. For instance, MEC is currently in the process of voter registration in preparation for the elections.</p>
2.8 The Office of the Vice President	
<p>The Constitution of Malawi recognizes and places value in the office of the Vice President as the second highest office in the land (Chapter 8, Section 78-82).</p> <p>We are concerned with the lack of respect to the Office and the person of the Vice President. We ask the Government to see to it that the Office of the Vice President be given all respect and necessary support.</p>	<p>Government takes note of the concern by the Catholic Bishops of the “lack of respect to the office and the person of the Vice-President”.</p> <p>It is not clear what information the Bishops had in reviewing the day-to-day operations of the Vice-President to really understand how the hierarchy and protocol in the Office of the President has always functioned.</p> <p>The government, however, respectfully reminds the Catholic Bishops that under our Constitution there is only one Head of State and Government. Presently this country is led by His Excellency Ngwazi Professor Bingu wa Mutharika. The Vice-President Right Honourable Mrs. Joyce Banda is not at par with the State President.</p> <p>Government confirms that it has provided comfortable homes for the Vice-President, in both Lilongwe and Blantyre, with full security, offices, staff, police convoys and many other facilities</p>

	according to her entitlements.
Conclusion	
<p>This is our honest sharing of the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish facing Malawi today. As a nation we have much to be grateful for, but in the process of charting the way forward, we realize that we need to work together. The principles of the poor must continue to guide us. We invite all citizens to take up their responsibility in this honest assessment of ourselves. In so doing, we hope to usher in a new era that is characterised by honest and respectful dialogue and an ardent common search for solutions towards the integral development of Malawi, ‘<i>Wakutsina nkhotu ndu mnasi</i>’! May Mary, the mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the model of discipline, intercede for us so that our country may enjoy good governance and development.</p>	<p>The Government of the Republic of Malawi welcomes the views of Catholic Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi on the governance of this country.</p> <p>However, it feels the Catholic Bishops have somehow been misled to paint this unsubstantiated gloomy picture of the “signs of the times” in our country.</p> <p>Government does not believe that the people of Malawi would honestly read the signs to portend an impending crisis in Malawi.</p> <p>Instead, the people of Malawi would read <i>The Signs of The Times</i> to herald a country with plenty of food, increased incomes, more job creating opportunities and generally better standards of living for a growing number of people.</p> <p>This is because everywhere one goes, people are much happier today than they were ever before.</p> <p>To that end, government hopes that their Lordships would not be influenced by political militarism, but rather by divine spiritualism to seek peace and harmony in our country.</p> <p>Government also feels that direct contact and dialogue with government or in some cases with the President, rather than media populism, would be of mutual benefit to both sides and would help to enhance mutual understanding among all people.</p> <p>Therefore, government feels that the Pastoral Statement unduly highlights the so-called “the griefs and anguish”, while the President has received so many genuine praises, awards and accolades, from local and independent international organisations and institutions.</p> <p>The international community, except the opposition in Malawi, and now the Catholic Bishops, consider that Malawi’s economic development is a resounding success and short of a miracle. This has happened because there is genuine</p>

	<p>democracy, rule of law, human rights, peace and tolerance in our country.</p> <p>Finally, the government assures the Catholic Bishop of its readiness to engage in a constructive dialogue so as agree on a modus operandi about how we can work together to transform our nation from poverty to prosperity.</p> <p>It is also the government’s hope that in their call to “the principles of common good” (caritus in veritate), the Catholic Bishops would agree to review their Pastoral Statement of 31st October 2010 to see if the “spiritual” message that is traditionally embodied in such messages has come out clearly.</p>
<p>Most reverend Tarcisius G. Ziyaye - Chairman and Archbishop of Blantyre</p> <p>Right Reverend Joseph M. Zuza - Vice-Chairman and Bishop of Mzuzu</p> <p>Right Reverend Remi Ste-Marie - Bishop of Lilongwe</p> <p>Right Reverend Peter Musikuwa - Bishop of Chikhwawa</p> <p>Right Reverend Thomas Msusa - Bishop of Zomba</p> <p>Right Reverend Emmanuel Kanyama - Bishop of Dedza</p> <p>Right Alesandro Pagan - Bishop of Mangochi</p> <p>Right Reverend Montfort Stima - Auxiliary Bishop of Blantyre</p> <p>Very Reverend Martin Mtumbuka - Bishop Elect of Karonga</p>	<p>GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI</p>
<p>Date: 31 October, 2010</p>	