



Government of the Republic of Malawi



REMARKS

BY

Hon. John Khumbo Chirwa, M P

**MINISTER OF INDUSTRY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
MALAWI**

**THE SECOND AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, DAKAR, SENEGAL**

29-30 SEPTEMBER,

- The Honourable Madam, Minister of Scientific Research of the Republic of Senegal, Professor Dia Gassama, Chairperson of AMCOST
- Honourable Minister of NEPAD Abdou Aziz SOW
- Representative of AU Commission
- My fellow Ministers of Science and Technology
- Representatives of our International Partners
- Ladies and Gentlemen

1.0 INTRODUCTION

I would first of all like to thank you, Chairperson for giving me the opportunity to make a statement on the state of science, technology and innovation as it relates to Malawi.

Science, technology and innovation (STI) are recognized the world over as the key drivers of economic growth and development. The 2001 Human Development Report has, among others, the following captions in its overview that demonstrate the importance of science and technology:

- People all over the world have high hopes that new technologies will lead to healthier lives, greater social freedoms, increased knowledge and more productive livelihoods.
- The 20th century's unprecedented gains in advancing human development and eradicating poverty came largely from technological breakthroughs.
- Technology is created in response to market pressures, not the needs of poor people, who have little purchasing power.
- In the network age, every country needs the capacity to understand and adapt global technologies for local needs.

These points underline the important place of science, technology and innovation in the social-economic development processes. The third and fourth captions are poignant for Malawi. The majority of Malawians are poor and are characterized by low purchasing power. It is, therefore, painfully true that they are missing out on what global technologies have to offer in terms of their impact on healthier lives, greater social freedoms, increased knowledge and more productive livelihoods. The low

productivity that characterizes the key livelihoods in Malawi is directly linked with Malawi's under development in science, technology and innovation.

The key challenge of Government of Malawi is achieving the vision of turning the nation from a predominantly importing and consuming country into a predominantly producing and exporting one. The approach to this, will no doubt be multi-sectoral. However, it is expected that science, technology and innovation will play a central role. In line with The Millennium Development Goals, NEPAD resolutions on Science and Technology (2003), Malawi Vision 2020, Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy and Malawi Economic Growth Strategy, His Excellency The President of the Republic of Malawi, Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika established a new ministry of Industry, Science and Technology after the May 2004 General Elections. Its mandate is to promote industrial development through application of science and technology. The ministry is made up of two technical departments, namely Science and Technology, and Industry.

2.0 DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Department of Science and Technology's vision is to make Malawi an industrialized nation with scientifically and technologically led sustainable growth and development, while the mission statement is to regulate, support, promote and coordinate the development and application of science and technology so as to create wealth and improve the quality of life through:

- Promoting the adoption, development and application of science and technology for macro-economic growth

- Facilitating the utilization of science and technology specifically designed to convert raw materials into new wealth
- Assisting in building national capacity to harness science and technology
- Facilitating the construction of requisite scientific and technology infrastructure; and
- Facilitating the adaptation of appropriate foreign technology necessary to boost the economy.

3.0 GLOBALISATION

Malawi, like the rest of Africa, is operating in a global economy with a number of challenges and implications. These include world trade, international relations, economic competition, communications, labour migration (brain drain of skilled professionals), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), modern management approaches and networking beyond the country's borders.

In order for the country to fare favourably in the globalised economy, Malawi is committed to enhancing and strengthening networks, regionally such as NEPAD and internationally where they exist and develop new ones where they are not available. In doing so, it can learn from best practices, and improve the management of science, technology and innovation so as to fare favourably in a competitive globalised environment. Use of ICT, exchange programmes, attachments, skills development for a global environment, learning innovations from others, sharing of knowledge with other governments and institutions will enable Malawi to place itself in a competitive position.

4.0 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The impact of HIV/AIDS in Malawi has increased in recent years. Loss of human resources, increased medical and funeral costs as well as payments of death benefits continue to rise. Loss of productive time and service delivery also suffers due to absence, for sustained periods, as a result of deaths or illness. Additionally, human development efforts and strategies need to take into account health related and other causes of personnel losses. Otherwise, shortage of skilled and professionally trained personnel will remain a big challenge. In this light the government of Malawi is in a process of setting up a University of Science and Technology. The government will need assistance from cooperating partners in setting up the university.

5.0 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Availability of adequate financial resources is critical to the realisation of the Department's vision and mission. Currently, financial provision to cover costs associated with delivery of science, technology and innovation operations is extremely low. To date, however, some gains have been achieved in service delivery due to availability of donors. Since donor funds have time parameters, service delivery can adversely be affected. Inadequate financial resources, therefore, constitutes a major drive for change in Department of Science and Technology.

In view of the above, there is a growing recognition within the Department that appropriate strategic responses be explored to ensure that critical programmes do not suffer. The Department is exploring other avenues to enable it maximise the utilisation of the limited financial resources as

well as identifying other means of securing financial support from elsewhere, whenever possible. That is why, later on, Malawi will be making a statement on its commitment to the African Science and Innovation Facility.

In the meanwhile, government is working on implementation of the NEPAD resolution of 2003, which called upon African Governments to commit 1% of GDP for research and development. Once Government releases the resources, it is expected that significant achievements in science, technology and innovation will be attained.

6.0 AFRICA'S S&T CONSOLIDATION PLAN OF ACTION

The Honourable Chair, Madam Minister, I am pleased to note that the Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action was prepared jointly by African Union and NEPAD. This is a very important development for the continent to develop a common agenda. This will avoid duplication of effort and wasting of resources, because Africa Union will be implementing the Action Plan through its arm of NEPAD.

There are key areas the Consolidated Action Plan is building upon. These are:

1. Capacity building
2. Knowledge promotion and
3. Technology innovation

The importance of these pillars to Africa as a continent, and Malawi in particular, cannot be underestimated.

In the four-program cluster, there is an area of implementation of the program at regional levels. This is important because resources should not be spread thinly,

rather, taking advantage of regional strength. The programs are not talking of completely new projects and institutions, but concentrating on adding value to existing projects, programs and institutions. The other component is that of creation of an African Science and Innovation Facility. As mentioned earlier, Malawi is in full support, in principal, of the establishment of the facility of this nature and would therefore endorse the idea. I also agree that in order to implement the Facility, the Science and Technology Steering Committee be tasked with the responsibility to the development and adoption of the specific instrument for the creation of the proposed Facility. The Committee should also design and adopt a system for allocating resources to maximise impact, ensure **transparency** and **accountability**.

On the implementation plan, I would like to support the idea of strengthening the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST) as the overall governance body to provide political leadership and make recommendation on policies for application of science, technology and innovation in Africa's development.

7.0 MALAWI'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE ACTION PLAN

Malawi is well known for its achievements in the field of biodiversity of inland fishes (lakes, rivers and dams). Madam Chairperson, I would like to bring to your attention the fact that Malawi plays an important role in advancing biodiversity research of inland fisheries and will continue to participate in research and development. Bunda College of Agriculture of the University of Malawi and the Department of Fisheries have collaborated with other institutions in Southern Africa in this research area. I am pleased to report that Bunda College of Agriculture is a regional centre that

offers graduate and postgraduate training in aquaculture and inland fisheries.

Without going into details of the projects, I list here, the areas of direct relevance where Malawi will be actively involved:

- Mobilisation and training of conservation scientists
- Strengthening and networking of African Gene Banks
- Adding value to Africa's biodiversity
- Africa's data bank of energy research and technology
- Scientific assessment of Africa's water resource and systems
- Assessment of Engineering infrastructure and curriculum of higher education institutions
- Promoting university-industry partnerships for engineering training
- Promoting the development and diffusion of appropriate food processing
- Promoting industrial use of cassava
- Development and adoption of a common STI indicators

I am hoping that when the time comes to implement these projects, Malawi's capability and interest will be sought.

On behalf of the Government of Malawi, I thank the International Partners, who are here with us, for supporting research and development issues at National, Regional and Continental levels In Africa. Malawi appreciates their involvement in this sector. Also the Government of Senegal for according me the opportunity to address the gathering. Finally, may I thank the government of Senegal, through you Minister, for hosting me and my delegation at this

conference. Please convey Malawi,s appreciation to His Excellency the President Abdoulaye Wade.

I thank you for your attention.