

My Fellow Malawians,

In the harsh adversity of our times and the despondency that it usually brings, the seduction is often times all too compelling to omit all of this nation's great blessings. The blessing of the selfless sacrifice of men and women who built the foundation of the Malawi we now call home. Whether it was that trailblazing preacher from Magomero who refused, through silence, to be complicit in the suffering of his people. Whether it was those who bravely faced the live muzzle of the colonizer's rifle in Nkhata Bay in 1959. Or the many men and women who perished in Malawi's lonely and cruel political prison cells standing up to the oppression and tyranny of one of their own. Or in the students and Catholic Bishops who stared down a 30-year-old autocracy and told it that they would have it no more.

The stories of all of these men and women were singular and different. But regardless of which corner of this country they came from or what language they spoke, they were all connected by their unyielding belief that they could make something greater out of this nation. That through their earnest and honest efforts, they could guarantee a dignified living to the masses of our people. That every child, regardless of its sex and the accident of where it was born, would have equal opportunities to make it in life. They must have been united in their conviction that they could hew, out of this homeland, a place where everyone possessed of industry, grit and zeal could thrive and succeed. Where the diversity of their ethnicity would be celebrated but subordinated to our shared citizenship and love of country.

In short, we should always remind ourselves, my fellow Malawians, that the freedom that we enjoy today, that the peace and tranquility that we enjoy today was not given to us on a silver platter. Many of our forebearers paid a heavy price. Some with their own lives. They paid the ultimate price.

My fellow Malawians, these sacrifices were made by people from all corners of our country. From Chitipa to Nsanje. From Mchinji to Nkhotakota. They belonged to all tribes. Not just one tribe. Not just one region. But they were ready to die for their nation. They were ready to die for all tribes. They were ready to die for brothers and sisters they had never seen or met, brothers and sisters who did not speak their language or shared the same cultural practices. Many of them alive today never personally benefitted and they and their children and grandchildren continue to wallow in abject poverty. They suffer in silence. It was with this overwhelming sense of duty to my nation that 4 years ago I left the comfort of the private sector and joined politics to put in my shift, as they say.

At that time I accepted to partner Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika and successfully run on the ticket of the Democratic Progressive Party. Although this was a huge personal sacrifice, it surely pales in comparison to the incredible sacrifices of our forebearers.

My fellow Malawians, indeed, despite all the sacrifices our forebearers made, indeed, despite all the sacrifices many Malawians continue to make, our nation remains one of the poorest in the world. Our communities are being ravaged by curable diseases; corruption is worsening and with it comes the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor; our public education system is crumbling forcing those with a little bit of money send their children to private schools; the connected and the powerful continue to plunder our nation's wealth as our hospitals lack basic medicines and medical equipment due to lack of funding; agriculture remains subsistent and the threat of hunger is always looming due to over-reliance of rain-fed agriculture; unbridled overpopulation and environmental degradation are threatening our communities; nepotism, cronyism and regionalism are rampant as opportunities are a reserve for those with tribal connections. In short, despite the peace and tranquility fought for by our forefathers, we are in this generation failing to harness the immense potential of this country. Instead, we have decided to destroy what others built. We have decided to think only for ourselves and not for our country. We have decided to look out for our tribesmen and not our compatriots.

And, therefore, today I come before you with humility to address Malawians here and beyond. Malawians of different social standing, traditions, cultures, religions, regions and political divide.

There comes a time in everyone's life when one has to bid farewell to personal comfort for the benefit of his compatriots. It is a decision that our forefathers made as I have already said. It is a decision that I have made.

But before I share with you my dream for the future of Malawi, allow me to first thank His Excellency Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika, the President of the Republic of Malawi who out of the many Malawians chose me and accorded me the opportunity to partner him as his running mate in the 2014 general elections on a Democratic Progressive Party ticket. I must admit, His Excellency run and directed a very successful campaign that led me to serve my country with dedication to duty as the Vice President of the Republic of Malawi after winning the elections. I owe it to him for my growing out of the 'BABY' I was. I thank Malawians for the confidence they repositied in us. I thank Malawians for the support you have continued to render us despite all the challenges faced.

I believe that in the past 4 years of duty as his Vice President we have had a very cordial relationship and still believe that this cordial relationship will continue as I serve as his State Vice President till the next administration is elected into office in 2019.

Let me also thank the special people who have created a movement dubbed "CHILIMA MOVEMENT" for the courage and determination shown to date. I am humbled with the confidence they have placed in me. I am sure they are following a cause, that is Democracy. This is the democracy we fought for in 1992 that people should freely exercise their birth right to express their views without fear. I should also, perhaps, thank the people who have either enjoyed the fray or simply resigned to submission, *nanga ife tingatani, nanga ife tingasinthenji*. But in truth, such silence and inaction amounts to complicity in the plunder of our nation's wealth.

My fellow Malawians, time has come when each and every able Malawian should take ownership of the future of our country. We must fight for a just Malawi. A Malawi that will indeed showcase milk and honey. A Malawi that will promote Love, Peace, Unity, Compassion, Discipline and Self-esteem. A Malawi that knows no Tribalism, Nepotism, Racism and Creed. A Malawi whose citizens will once again walk tall wherever they will go, because of the discipline and respect for authority, law and order. A Malawi that will be corrupt-free, a haven for hard work and where its citizens will protect its assets.

My Fellow Malawians, that is a taste of my dream for the Malawi I would love to see in my lifetime. Today I am joining my fellow Malawians across the political divide calling for a united transformational leadership to change the destiny of our beautiful country.

My fellow Malawians, we should all dare dream of a better Malawi. Whatever our political party affiliation or tribe or religion, we should all fight for a fairer society. We cannot all be politicians. But we must all contribute towards an all-inclusive and all-encompassing movement of the silent majority that are tired of the economic stagnation and social malaise that has engulfed this nation. By doing so, we shall keep on the tradition of those gallant sons and daughters of this land who have come before us. Indeed, in the words of the Scripture '... *since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*' There must be an end to this moral decadence.

Therefore, I would like to urge all Malawians of voting age to participate in the forthcoming 2019 general elections beginning with registering to be eligible to vote.

Yes, people will ask. You were right in the system, why did you not change things? This will be yet another discussion point as I will shortly be sharing with you all my fellow Malawians my plans for my future.

For now, as the DPP has announced that it is holding its convention this June, I have decided not to contest on the DPP ticket for any position at the forthcoming party's convention, let alone challenge the party's presidency. I wish all delegates to the convention the best of luck and God's blessings as they chart a new chapter in the DPP. May democracy reign supreme and may the best candidates win.

My fellow Malawians, we must give this country a new lease of life. This is the only place we can call home. There is no other place we can call home. For me, this is the only house I have lived in. We must demand better of ourselves. We must clean this house. We must clean our house. We must drain the swamp. This is our country. This is our future. ***Dziko Lathu. Tsogolo Lathu.***

May the good Lord continue to watch over and bless our beautiful home, Malawi.

I thank you for your attention.