

UNITED NATIONS IN MALAWI ADVOCATES FOR DECENT WORK FOR ALL AND SUSTAINABLE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AMIDST NATURAL DISASTERS ON WORLD LABOUR DAY

On Labour Day, we applaud the contributions of workers to our society and economy. We also recognize all those whose efforts have advanced the rights of workers in Malawi and around the world.

I am honoured to bring you a message of solidarity and goodwill from the entire UN system in Malawi. This year's theme, "Natural Disasters a Threat to Livelihoods and Decent Work: Creating Decent Jobs and Extending Social Protection is key to Sustainable Recovery," resonates strongly with all of us.

As we celebrate worker's contributions, including those in the informal economy, we acknowledge the criticality of labour to achieving social and economic development. The African Union's Agenda 2063 and the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognize the importance of decent work in achieving sustainable development.

While we acknowledge the efforts of the Government of Malawi to create jobs and generate wealth, it is important to ensure the decency of the jobs created. Decent work can be summed up as "Promoting Jobs, Protecting People." We should create opportunities for everyone to get work that is productive and delivers a fair income, rights at work, social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration. We should also ensure equal opportunities for women, men, young people and persons with disabilities in the workplace.

Without a doubt, climate-related shocks have set back Malawi's growth trajectory. We are still tallying the impact of Cyclone Freddy, that devastated the southern region, including on jobs and social protection. The cyclone traumatized the nation, caused loss of life and livelihood, displacement, damage to infrastructure and property, disruptions to supply chains and markets, and overall has increased vulnerability to poverty and food insecurity. This has left a huge gap in terms of employment and small-scale businesses that will need to be rebuilt.

In the face of this, however, there are glimmers of hope. The strong leadership of the Government of Malawi in coordinating the relief and response must be commended. Ordinary Malawians have rallied to render support to their brothers and sisters. Countries in the region have come to the assistance of their neighbour. Development partners, NGOs and the international community are re-programming development support for Malawi. The UN pledges its support to implementation of the national response plan and the eventual recovery plan, to prioritize medium and long-term recovery interventions.

The commemoration of Labour Day calls us to reflect on the country's development challenges and collectively plan how we can co-create home-grown solutions to recover better and build sustainable livelihoods for all.

On this day, I challenge all of our partners – in the Government, private sector, civil society, academia, the development community – to reaffirm their commitment to support national efforts to end child labour, reduce youth unemployment, enhance social protection for the most vulnerable and promote the creation of decent work for all to accelerate development and rescue the Sustainable Development Goals in Malawi.

THE END

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