

SPEECH BY

**DEPUTY MINISTER OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY HON. CHIKUMBUTSO HIWA, M.P.**

AT

INNOVATION AFRICA SUMMIT

CAPE TOWN, 7TH OCTOBER 2012

- **Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers Of Education Present**
- **Managing Director, African Brains**
- **Distinguished Ladies And Gentlemen**
- **All Protocols Observed**

It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning to join my fellow colleagues in the region in sharing ideas on the advancement of education in Africa using ICT, Science and Technology. I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to African Brains for once again bringing together the leadership of Africa on this table to share how we can grow together in this area.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will be sharing with you this morning how Malawi is fairing in the area of ICT, Science and Technology; but before I do that, a little introduction of our education system.

Malawi has an 8-4-4 education system, where 8 years are for primary school, 4 years secondary school, and 4 years for tertiary education. Currently enrolment at primary school is at 3.6 million and at secondary level, it is at 250,000. We have about 5,300 primary schools and 1,000 secondary schools.

Ladies and gentlemen

The Malawi government recognized the importance of Science and Technology in the early 70's. This was inspired by Malawi's participation in the conference of cabinet ministers responsible for application of science and technology to development in Africa, held

in Dakar in 1974. At this conference, it was observed that research and development and scientific technological services, are a source of momentum for development and that each country should possess its own scientific and technological base capable of generating and accelerating this momentum. Malawi has since developed a National Science and Technology policy and is integrating it in national development as a key priority area. Science and technology sector is governed by the National Science and Technology Policy of 2002 and the Science and Technology Act Of 2003.

Colleagues

Ladies and gentlemen

The concept of science and technology as a tool for rapid socio-economic development cannot be overemphasized. The application of science and technology has aided industrialized countries to develop their economies. For example, China, South Korea, India, Malaysia and Singapore have applied science and technology successfully to transform their economies.

Compared to the rest of the world, Malawi together with other Sub-Saharan African countries is lagging behind in development and application of Science and Technology. The Science and Technology system in Malawi has been characterized by a pluralistic approach in its management, instability of institutions and low integration of STI issues in national development planning process. As a result, there is inadequate harmonization in capacity building, priority setting, resource mobilization and utilization. The situation calls for a common and shared understanding to promote, support, regulate, coordinate

and utilize science, technology and innovation to address Malawi's current socio-economic problems.

To deal with this challenge, the National Commission of Science and Technology was established. The Commission is charged with shaping and driving new research and development agenda for harnessing STI developments in the country.

In the next five years, Malawi will be addressing the following strategic issues in science and technology:

- Research and Development;
- Information and Knowledge Management;
- Innovation, Technology Transfer and Commercialization;
- Networking, Partnerships and Collaboration;
- Regulatory Framework;
- Human Resource Development and Retention;
- Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation; and
- Infrastructure and Resource Mobilization

I will briefly discuss the strategic areas:

1. **Research and development; under research and development:**

Malawi is concentrating on the following sub-sectors; Agriculture and Greenbelt; Health, Social Sciences and Humanities; Engineering, Industry, Energy and Design; Nuclear Science and Technology; Biotechnology; and Climate Change. Currently in this area there is inadequate infrastructure and human resources, poor coordination and inadequate financial resources

2. **Information and knowledge management:** the major focus is on packaging and management of the information available. Much of the information and knowledge in Malawi is not optimally utilized because it is not properly packaged and managed.

Inadequate STI information dissemination mechanisms lead to lack of public understanding of STI issues. It is therefore difficult for decision makers and the general public to appreciate the role of STI in development endeavours. It is therefore necessary to make deliberate efforts to develop and invest in the acquisition, organization, dissemination, repackaging and translation of STI information for socio-economic development. Therefore, STI information becomes a strategic issue.

3. Innovation, Technology Transfer and Commercialization;

The major challenge faced in Malawi is lack of a proper innovation system which can identify and support innovators put their innovations into practice and exploit innovations in a manner that adds value to goods and services, and link innovations to the market.

The vision of the Government of Malawi is to turn the country from a predominantly consuming and importing nation to a producing and exporting economy and this cannot be achieved without regard to innovation.

Innovations lead to technological breakthroughs. There are a number of new technologies in Malawi, however, most of these technologies are not being utilized due to lack of proper technology transfer and commercialization mechanisms.

4. Networking, Partnerships and Collaboration:

Networking, collaboration and partnerships have the advantage of securing greater value from expenditure through STI structures. National Commission of Science and Technology as an umbrella body on STI issues in Malawi is facilitating networking, partnerships

and collaboration between and among local and international STI institutions for the advancement of STI. We are proud to be associated with the University of Western Cape for one of our projects in HIV/AIDS. We thank you for the partnership.

5. Regulatory Framework;

The sector has been experiencing weak enforcement mechanisms for effective implementation of STI programmes, such as regulation of research, enforcement of ethical standards, standard operating procedures and promotion of technology transfer and commercialization.

6. Human Resource Development and Retention

Statistics for Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) human resources in Malawi reveal a low stock of STI personnel at an estimated figure of 42 researchers per million of inhabitants in 1991. With the commitment of Government to establish six new universities it is expected that there will be high output of science graduates and a convenient working environment will be provided in the new institutions higher learning.

7. Planning Monitoring and Evaluation

There is no monitoring and evaluation framework in the STI system to assess the progress of various policy interventions.

In order to guide the implementation of STI policy and assess contributions of various collaborating partners and performance of the STI sector, planning, monitoring and evaluation is a necessary tool.

8. Infrastructure and Resource Mobilization

Amidst general concerns from the science and technology community that there is inadequate funding for the sector, Government through its pronouncements has shown commitment to achieve the 1% of GDP as funding to research and development as recommended by UNESCO, AU, and NEPAD.

Future of Science & Technology in Malawi

There is a strong political will and commitment by the leadership of Malawi by her Excellency Madam Joyce Banda, and Her Government to harness Science, Technology and Innovation. The commitment has been shown by increasing the Government gross domestic expenditure on research and experimental development (GERD).

Malawi has also put in place regulatory and legal frameworks for the implementation of science and technology programs. Malawi Parliament approved the Science and Technology Act in 2003 and the government approved the Science and Technology Policy in 2008. This is aligned with the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy

In Conclusion, It is the wish of the government of Malawi to promote research, science and technology. Malawi is promoting the culture of research among its learners and scholars .We are committed to make this work as we know that the benefits of investing in research, science and technology are great. We look forward in partnering with you in our journey.

I thank you for your attention.