

## **Personal Message from His Excellency Dr. Bakili Muluzi National Chairman of the United Democratic Front**

*My Fellow Malawians,*

*Ten years ago, when I took over the leadership of our country, democracy had collapsed under the one party system of government. Our people lived under the reign of terror, oppression, and subjugation. The civil society had no guarantees of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and as a result, people lived under constant fear of arrest, torture, and harassment. Institutions for economic change and transformation had been personalized and the private sector became so atrophied that it could not effectively contribute to the economic development of our country. Freedom of worship was so controlled to the extent that Christians and Moslems alike, had no right to worship freely as guaranteed under the United Nations Charter.*

*It is against this background that I established the United Democratic Front (UDF). I was determined to change the system of political and economic governance so as to guarantee freedom, unity, peace, political rights and economic development of all Malawians. I am pleased to state that I have now established, throughout the country, basic human rights, the rule of law and political freedoms. People are now free to join any political party of their choice and run any business they want, to write anything they want in the media, and even to criticize the government. People are also free to worship in any manner they choose.*

*The past ten years have been a period of transformation and consolidation of institutions for political governance. I am satisfied that the UDF has evolved a clear strategy for transforming Malawi. We know where the country has come from, where it should be going and how to get there. In this Manifesto we have clearly stated our goals, accomplishments, our challenges, and our unfinished business. The next five years will be a period when we shall build upon the past experience of UDF rule.*

*I am pleased to say that amidst the continuing challenges, the UDF has fulfilled its goals towards eradicating poverty. In order to change the face of rural Malawi, I initiated the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) which has improved rural infrastructure, widened access to social services, and brought about a spirit of community and self reliance. With the assistance of the World Bank, the UDF invested MK12.2 billion in MASAF I and II. By the end of 2003 a total of 2.5 million people will have benefited directly from the facilities created under MASAF II.*

*As a result of the successes of MASAF I and II, the UDF government has sourced MK6.3 billion for MASAF III to be disbursed in the next three years. During this period, we shall transform MASAF into an autonomous institution which will become a flagship for community empowerment and development accountability. MASAF III will also*

*provide a facility for economic empowerment through loans and credits for the poor, women, youth, and other vulnerable groups.*

*In the area of poverty reduction, I strongly believe in the power of the people to govern themselves. For that reason in 1998, we passed the Local Government Act and followed that up with elections of ward councillors in 2002. The UDF has established a financial, legal, and management framework for implementing the devolution process. Successful implementation of decentralization requires strong political will and commitment which only UDF is experienced enough to provide.*

*As I have stated in many fora, agriculture has central importance to the strategy for poverty reduction and food security in Malawi. The UDF government will continue to give top priority to promoting agricultural production by increasing inputs and expanding food diversification while empowering farmers to engage in income raising cash crop production. The UDF has plans to launch large scale irrigation schemes to expand winter cropping using waters of Lake Malawi. The next UDF government will enact a Land Law to consolidate the land tenure system so that Malawians are not deprived ownership of their own land. The UDF will vigorously pursue sustainable development by protecting the land from degradation.*

*During the past 5 years, I have successfully mobilized enough maize to feed families affected by drought. My government continues to supply Starter Packs to*

*subsistence farmers to increase food productivity. It pleases me to note that our determination resulted in substantial improvements in maize production and anticipated bumper yields.*

*One of the promises I made to the people of Malawi in 1994 is the provision of Universal Health Care and since then my government has constructed Mzuzu General Hospital and district hospitals in Thyolo, Chiradzulu and Chitipa. Zomba General Hospital is being upgraded to a modern hospital. My government established the National Aids Commission which has attracted funds from the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. Free distribution of Niverapin for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of the HIV virus has started. The next UDF government will continue ensuring provision of adequate health services to all Malawians. We will also vigorously respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic by continuing leadership in sensitizing the public about the disease and expanding access to free anti retroviral drugs to infected Malawians.*

*Another area of great satisfaction to me was the introduction of free primary education in 1994. This will remain a major landmark for the UDF and the nation. The transformation that has taken place in the lives of over 2 million children, who were denied the opportunity to go to school under MCP rule, is monumental. The next five years will be a time for the UDF to consolidate the gains from free primary education by improving quality and expanding access at secondary and tertiary levels. The UDF will continue*

revitalizing the education system and improving efficiency and effectiveness by streamlining educational administration and providing more teaching and learning resources.

In the area of monetary and financial management, we have been implementing economic reforms which are enhancing opportunities for mobilization of savings and lending to the private sector. We shall focus on creating a stable framework for economic growth. We will aim at maintaining macroeconomic stability by ensuring fiscal discipline in expenditure management, and maintaining a prudent monetary policy. The UDF will continue with structural reforms to privatize unprofitable parastatal institutions.

I am also pleased with the launch of the "One Village One Product" programme in Malawi. The program will provide new market channels for agricultural produce in rural areas so as to further distribute incomes among the poor. Furthermore, the programme will provide chances for rural communities to add more value to their produce by transforming the raw materials into finished and marketable products.

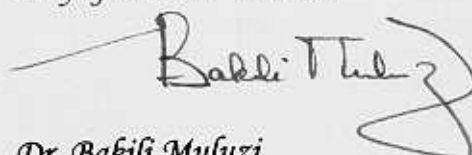
With regard to gender issues, I am glad to say that the UDF prides itself with the reputation of improving the status of women, who were voiceless and marginalized during the MCP era. Under the UDF government, the participation of women in education and decision-making has improved enormously. More than ever the party is committed to advancing equality of

opportunity between men and women and other disadvantaged groups including the disabled and youth.

In the area of democracy, the prime mandate of the UDF is to safeguard the hard earned freedom and democracy and foster development oriented governance. I believe that peace and stability are the rubric of social and economic transformation. Therefore, UDF reiterates its recommitment to participatory decision making to achieve shared national goals and aspirations. The UDF government will continue to promote political harmony and expand political voice among Malawians in order to maintain peace and stability.

As I leave the mantle of leadership to my successor, I do so with a sense of achievement, satisfaction, and pride. I have done all the things I had set out to do. I am handing over a strong system of political and economic governance. Multiparty democracy has taken root and has been recognized not only in Malawi but throughout the world. I am also handing over concrete and solid programmes for economic advancement and rural transformation. I am therefore confident that the next UDF government will start on a much stronger framework that will enable us continue to achieve higher levels of development.

May God Bless You All.



**Dr. Bakili Muluzi**  
National Chairman of the UDF