

**Joint meeting of the Westminster Malawi APPG and Holyrood CPG
with the President of Malawi**

McMillan Room, Palace of Westminster

27th July 2021, 10-11am

This special joint meeting with members of the Westminster Malawi All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) and the Holyrood Malawi Cross Party Group (CPG) was convened to meet with H.E. Lazarus Chakwera, the President of the Republic of Malawi, while he was in the UK to attend the Global Education Summit.

This was a hybrid meeting, with a small number of delegates in the room and most joining virtually. Appropriate Covid-19 restrictions were followed by agreement with the House authorities.

In-person attendees:

From the UK:

- Patrick Grady MP, SNP (APPG Chair)
- Lord Jack McConnell, Labour (APPG Hon. President)
- David Linden MP, SNP
- David Hope-Jones (APPG & CPG Secretariat)
- Salma Saade (SNP Westminster Foundation for Democracy, SNP Group)

From Malawi:

- H.E. Lazarus Chakwera, the President of Malawi
- H.E. Mr Kena Mphonda, Malawi High Commissioner to the UK
- Col. Raphael Mbobo, ADC to the President
- Harvey Chigumula, Chief of Protocol
- Dr. John Mwase
- Mr. Sean Kampondeni, EA

Digital attendees:

- Liam McArthur MSP, Scottish Lib Dems (CPG Co-Convenor)
- Douglas Ross MP & MSP, Scottish Cons (Leader of the Scottish Conservatives)
- Dave Doogan MP, SNP
- Kirsten Oswald MP, SNP
- Chris Law MP, SNP (Co-Vice Chair of APPG)
- Margaret Ferrier MP, Independent (Co-Vice Chair of APPG)
- Kate Osamor MP, Labour
- Maureen Watt – former MSP
- Linda Fabiani – former MSP

Apologies:

- Allan Dorans MP, SNP
- Alexander Stewart MSP, Scottish Cons
- Anne McLaughlin MP, SNP (Co-Vice Chair of APPG)
- Stuart McMillan MSP, SNP
- Jackie Baillie MSP, Scottish Labour
- Edward Mountain MSP, Scottish Cons
- Ian Murray MP, Scottish Labour
- Clare Haughey MSP, SNP
- John Lamont MP, Scottish Cons
- Oliver Mundell MSP, Scottish Cons
- Murdo Fraser MSP, Scottish Cons
- Rhoda Grant MSP, Scottish Labour
- Patrick Harvie MSP, Leader of the Scottish Greens
- Angus McNeil MP, SNP
- David Mundell MP, Scottish Cons
- Colin Smyth MSP, Scottish Labour

Malawi All Party Parliamentary Group Chair, Patrick Grady MP welcomed HE President Chakwera to the Palace of Westminster and, on behalf of both the Westminster Malawi APPG and the Holyrood Malawi CPG, thanked him for the opportunity to meet while he is in London for the Global Education Summit.

Mr Grady welcomed Malawi's High Commissioner to the UK H.E. Kena Mphonda; Westminster and Holyrood Parliamentarians from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Malawi (including its Honorary President Lord McConnell) and those who have been Members of the Malawi Cross Party Group. Mr Grady and subsequent speakers expressed condolences to the President for the loss of life and suffering endured by the people of Malawi due to COVID-19.

The President's Opening Address:

H.E. President Chakwera said it was a joy to have such interaction and set out the following points:

- Malawi will continue to build on 2019 commitments made by the UK on investment and trade, whilst acknowledging that the world has changed through the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Malawi has launched its Vision 2063, a strategy that sets a long-term vision as a self-reliant, middle-income, industrialised nation, with inclusive wealth-generation. Malawi will achieve this while working together with the rest of Africa, and the rest of the world, in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030. Behind this vision statement are tangible deliverables outlining, for example, how Malawi will industrialise and commercialise agriculture, how it will mechanise agriculture, etc.
- Malawi will prioritise human development, with a positive mentality that says 'we can do it', 'we can achieve this', and 'we can truly become a prosperous nation'. We need a mentality that doesn't give up on Africa.
- Malawi is endowed with many high-value natural resources, but these could sometimes be more effectively managed.
- Malawi has largely been an Agri-economy and it is important to now look at what can be done to support industrialisation and value-addition. While looking to maximise cash exports, it is essential to retain a strong focus on domestic food security: you cannot build an economy on people that are starving. By subsidising farm inputs, crop yields have significantly increased. Now Malawi is about to start selling flour to South Sudan and has signed an MOU with India.
- Malawi is now looking for its friends to come back; to believe in Malawi and help push the nation along. Malawi is looking for the kind of investors who will help with this drive for industrialisation and help increase agricultural efficiencies, such as developing cold chains, to reduce wastage through production.
- Together, we can look at the topography of Malawi and see how the different types of soil and crops there can be helped. We can map out across the country the different economic zones and how they can be helped. We can develop smart cities through planned, sustainable industrialisation.
- Malawi intends to develop the tourist industry infrastructure so that people can come and see its natural beauty – the lake which has the most species of tropical fish, the mountains and rolling hills of the North.
- Malawi will strengthen affordable goods and services; it is rehabilitating the rail network, and it is improving roads.
- Covid-19 has been a challenge for all. No-one is safe until everyone is safe. There needs to be an equitable distribution of vaccines worldwide.

Questions/Comments:

Q. Lord McConnell - what are the President's hopes for the Global Education Summit and how has Education suffered in Malawi due to Covid-19? There have been reports of girls leaving school early. Has the President thoughts on the part Energy will play in the push for industrialisation?

A. The emphasis must be on girls' education. Malawi has increased the minimum age for marriage to 18 to help keep girls in school. This should also help address the rapid population growth issue. In the last year, Malawi has seen the tragic sexual abuse and exploitation of girls. The Minister of Education has been working with the Minister of Gender and the Chiefs, many of whom are champions of empowering girls and of helping them return to school. We have a programme to encourage children to stay in school, but we don't have the road infrastructure, nor public transport, to prevent girls walking 5kms to school which is unsafe, and hostels can attract predators. We need holistic investment beyond the school block. Children have been traumatised, first of all through the death of parents from HIV/AIDS and now Covid-19, and lockdown is causing mental health issues, as elsewhere in the world. For the young generation to have hope, we need to address mental health issues.

Energy is a real priority for this government. Every time Malawian business leaders come together and discuss impediments to real industrialisation and private sector growing exponentially, it is the question of Energy which always comes up most frequently. The Government of Malawi is working to increase hydro-electric power and solar, and it needs investors to augment its efforts. Malawi currently generates around 350MW. As a nation it needs almost 1,000MW to be able to industrialise sustainably. The Government has put together a compendium of investable projects which would help ensure that by 2024 it has the 1000MW it needs.

Malawi is looking at how it can develop public private partnerships (PPPs) so that Malawians can join in the exchange of ideas and technology, because we have plenty of sun and plenty of wind and plenty of water and, with all of those things combined, Malawi will be able to have the kind of energy it needs.

Malawi is acutely aware of the seriousness of environmental issues and wants to develop in a green and sustainable manner, becoming a productive country that is able to export more than it imports and so raise people's livelihoods.

Q. Chris Law MP - With less than 1% of people in Africa having been vaccinated, has COVAX been a failure and what steps are you having to take in Malawi to get the vaccine and to roll it out? Is Malawi being able to have its voice heard leading up to COP-26 and will there be a Malawi delegation at COP-26?

A. With COVAX, we need to look at the whole complexity of the situation. It's not necessarily a failure of trying to acquire the vaccine. Yes, a small percentage of the population is vaccinated. The infrastructure arrangements didn't make it optimal for African governments to acquire. Roll-out has been very slow because those producing the vaccines were doing so for clients not in the global south. A \$1 vaccine dose costs \$5 to roll-out and we need to get the politics out of the vaccine distribution. We are appealing to countries that have the vaccine. If anyone is not safe; everyone is not safe. We need to think beyond intellectual property rights.

I believe Malawi's voice is being heard but sometimes you wonder if Malawi is speaking in a language that other people don't understand! We have spoken at a UN level, AU and SADC and will

chair SADC from next month. We talk as honestly as possible to help find answers. We intend to be there at COP-26 and to fully participate.

Developing nations like Malawi are on the receiving end sometimes of the problems like climate change which have come from the agendas and actions of development nations. It is almost like we should be the ones held responsible for a world that has been largely destroyed by those who have not been as careful in the past, or even now. These things need to be addressed properly. The whole world needs to develop because if you have so many that languish in extreme poverty, even the rich will not enjoy their riches.

Q. Margaret Ferrier MP – As the local MP for Blantyre in Scotland, Margaret Ferrier looked forward to welcoming the President to the newly refurbished David Livingstone Centre which is due to re-open later this month. With regards trade, what talks have there been between Malawi and the UK Government, specifically the UK's Department for International Trade's new Developing Countries' Trading Scheme? How are negotiations to increase trade and reduce burdensome tariffs

A. I look forward to visiting Blantyre and Scotland. We of course have the city of Blantyre in Malawi named after the home of the famous Missionary, David Livingstone.

The talks between the UK and Malawi continue and we need to move from talking to action. The UK remains our biggest trading partner in Europe. We need to look at added value and, yes, I place great importance in the reduction of tariffs.

We are aware of our shared history with the UK. Nyasaland was a Protectorate and was never meant to be a colony as such. We want Malawians to know about, and benefit from, the many great things that come out of Malawi, from mineral treasures to the cichlids that you see in aquaria across the world. The terms of trading must be right for Malawians to benefit.

Q. David Linden MP - As an MP of a Glasgow constituency, like Patrick Grady, we are excited about hosting COP-26 and would agree with you about the developed world in the north having the biggest responsibility for the climate crisis. What does success look like for Malawi at COP-26?

A. Malawi wants to look at how it can industrialise in a green way, protecting the Earth for our children and grandchildren. When we fail to meet people's needs for fuel, they have no options but to cut down trees. When we hosted over a million refugees, Malawi's forests were destroyed as a source for cooking fuel. We want new technologies to support daily life in a sustainable way, without destroying the planet.

Q. Douglas Ross MP & MSP - Has the progress made by some farmers and sectors in innovation and technology been shared to benefit all across Malawi?

Like David Linden and other MPs, I have schools in my constituency that have strong links with Malawi, including Forres Academy. Do you have you a message for the young people in schools like at Forres Academy and across Scotland who have a connection with and great interest in Malawi?

A. Young people in Malawi are extremely ingenious. We can't be talking just about subsistence all these years when we have all these colleges and universities training young people. Let's use smart technology at a smallholder farmer level too. Let's challenge young people in the UK to partner with young people in Malawi to say 'we can do this'!

Liam McArthur MSP was invited to speak about the Holyrood Malawi Cross Party Group

Liam McArthur MSP – I have been Co-Convener of the Malawi Cross-Party Group in Holyrood for a number of years and the links with the Westminster All Party Parliamentary Group on Malawi are strong and appreciated. There is strong cross-party support in Scotland for the historic civic links with Malawi and strong engagement with the Malawian diaspora community.

Scotland, and the Holyrood Malawi Cross Party Group, has been working to change the Malawi narrative, just as Your Excellency calls for: challenging negative assumptions and working together in partnership. The CPG works to ensure all-party support continues and to keep Malawi on the parliamentary agenda: for example, ensuring the special partnership with Malawi, which is rooted in civic links, remains at the centre of the Scottish Government's updated international development programme.

H.E. President Chakwera - We are very happy to have friends like Scotland, with strong civic engagement. It is important that the relationships we have established over the years continue to flourish, not just through the diplomats and officials that represent governments but through the interaction of people-to-people links. This is what we are emphasising: when we come to talk about our relationship with the Scottish people – it is always the people-to-people links.

An area of potential further partnership is city planning and sustainable living. We need to keep our cities clean and healthy, tackling waste management in cities, re-cycling and creating riches from waste. We need to sort the engineering of roads and drainage. Malawi would benefit from others' perspectives in possible future city-to-city links like this.

Bringing the meeting to a close, Patrick Grady MP recognised the support of the Scotland Malawi Partnership and David Hope-Jones in particular, noting that the SMP could provide to the President a directory of the many vibrant links between every constituency in Scotland and Malawi.

Mr Grady also thanked staff and I.T teams in the Commons and Mr Speaker and the Sergeant at Arms for special permission to be hosted in the Commons during Parliamentary Recess.