



Members' Roundtable Meeting with Deputy Speakers of Malawi Parliament

13.30 – 15.30, Thursday 30th January 2020

Diamond Jubilee Room, Edinburgh City Chambers, 253 High Street, EH1 1YJ

ATTENDEES:

Hon. Madalitso Kazombo, Malawi National Assembly

Hon. Nkungulu Aisha Mambo-Adams, Malawi National Assembly

Prof. Heather Cubie, University of Edinburgh & Chair, Scotland Malawi Partnership

Stuart Brown, Scotland Malawi Partnership

Abigail Maseko, STEKAskills

Prof. Bob Kalin, University of Strathclyde

Bob Garrow, RS Garrow Ltd

Craig Docking, Scotland Malawi Partnership

Emma Wood, STEKAskills

Gift Thompson, STEKAskills

Joyce Phiri, Chair, Association of Malawians in Scotland

Kate Sykes, Link Community Development International

Malcolm McKitterick, Retired GP

Megan Harvey, Scotland Malawi Partnership

Prof. Tim Eden, World Child Cancer-Malawi Twinning Partnership

Tione Mtalimanja, Blait Power Ltd

Valerie McKitterick, Retired Teacher

Velli Nyirongo, Member of Malawian Diaspora

MINUTES:

On Thursday 30th January, the Scotland Malawi Partnership (SMP) welcomed the **First Deputy Speaker of the Malawi National Assembly, Hon. Madalitso Kazombo**, and the **Second Deputy Speaker, Hon. Nkungulu Aisha Mambo-Adams**, for a Roundtable event with SMP members.

Prof. Heather Cubie, Chair of the SMP, welcomed attendees and introduced the Deputy Speakers. All attendees were then given a chance to introduce themselves and their link to Malawi. Apologies were given for David Hope-Jones, Chief Executive of the SMP.

Stuart Brown, Deputy Chief Executive of the SMP, gave a presentation on the historic links between Scotland and Malawi and an overview of the SMP's role, activities and achievements. Thanks were given to the Lord Provosts of both Edinburgh and Glasgow for providing council spaces for meetings such as this.

The **Hon. Kazombo** thanked Heather and Stuart and was enthusiastic about the support Malawi receives from the people of Scotland, citing Heather's work on reducing the incidence of cervical cancer as an example. He then gave a presentation on the **strategic direction** of the Parliament of Malawi. He first highlighted the importance of having more women in positions of power within the Parliament. Out of 193 Malawian MPs, only 45 are female. He hopes that the next election will increase the number of female MPs to over 50%, and cited the election of Malawi's **first female Speaker, Hon. Catherine Gotani Hara**, as an important step forward. He envisages a Parliament that Malawians can depend on in times of need but, to achieve this, it must be more accessible. MPs should not be seen by the public as leaders, but as people they

can approach with issues of national importance that they wish to see resolved. MPs must be responsive to these issues, taking adequate time to debate, pass legislation and hold the Government to account to ensure said legislation is implemented effectively. MPs currently face challenges in their lack of autonomy, meaning that they are not given sufficient time and resources to carry out their duties, and their influence ends once a piece of legislation has passed. They aim to tackle such issues by increasing Parliament's capability and capacity to legislate and hold the Government to account and improve Parliament's participation in Inter-Parliamentary Organisations and Parliamentary affairs. MPs also aim to strengthen their relationship with their constituents, increase their outreach work and ensure that the Parliament Building and its infrastructure operate effectively, meeting the Parliament's needs and making it accessible to the people of Malawi. Partners helping the Parliament to achieve their goals include the EU, UN, National Democratic Institute, Royal Norwegian Embassy, USAID and CPA UK. Hon. Kazombo then expressed hope that a more youthful Parliament with a desire to change the status quo would bring about many positive changes. He also encouraged the export of more Malawian goods, such as organic honey and beef, as these products have, in his view, the potential to see similar success to the likes of Mzuzu Coffee and Kilombero Rice. The Hon. Kazombo then concluded by speaking of the importance of scholarships for young Malawians, particularly girls, so that they can use the skills and knowledge gained to inspire change within the country.

The **Hon. Aisha Mambo-Adams** followed by discussing the people of Malawi's awareness of policy and legislation. Ballots and other pieces of official documentation are often created in English only, therefore excluding non-English speaking Malawians from participating and keeping up-to-date with legislation that has been passed and to which they could hold officials to account, if they understood and knew about it. There are currently issues in that, while new laws are being successfully passed, not enough is being done to enforce these. For example, many are still unaware that the legal marriage age was increased from 15 to 18, resulting in young girls still being married while underage. She hopes that the new strategic direction of Parliament will increase awareness and understanding of what is being discussed. She also emphasised the need for MPs to have more power in questioning Government decisions and influencing change. She cited the example that the Malawian Parliament has the least amount of time in Africa to discuss budget, and this is something that the Government must be petitioned to increase.

Heather thanked both Deputy Speakers and offered the support of the SMP and its members. The meeting was then opened for members to ask the Deputy Speakers any questions they had and also share more details about their respective partnerships.

Gift Thompson asked about the current status of Malawi's Youth Parliament and what plans there were to support this going forward. The **Hon. Kazombo** explained that there is currently a Youth Parliamentarian in every Constituency, responsible for discussing youth-related issues, which are then passed on to the Social and Community Affairs Committee for further consideration. He recognises the importance of Malawi's young people having a voice, and hopes to see their influence increase.

Prof. Bob Kalin asked if the **Women's Caucus** is continuing, and what plans there were for 50/50 representation. The **Hon. Aisha Mambo-Adams** confirmed that the Women's Caucus is still active and is being supported by smaller Government organisations, with little support from the main Government. She reiterated the need for more women in Parliament, as this is still very male-dominated, meaning that women's needs and ideas are not being adequately represented.

Valerie McKitterick asked if budget issues were due to a lack of adequate funds within the Government, or if the funds did exist but were not being allocated to the Parliament. The **Hon. Kazombo** advised that funding comes from the Treasury and, while the money is there, proper disbursement is difficult.

Heather asked what links there are between Parliament and local communities and how to improve these. The **Hon. Aisha Mambo-Adams** advised that there are no official links at the present time as local councillors

have little contact with Parliament. Councillors must be empowered to make decisions at a council level which can then be successfully raised to a ministerial level. Obstacles are present in the form of corruption and lack of budget and resources.

Prof. Bob Kalin alerted the Deputy Speakers to the close working relationship between the University of Strathclyde and the Malawian Government in **sustainable water assets** and their management. Bob noted that Malawi has many excellent policies and procedures but that the funding for manpower to monitor and enforce is lacking. Bob plans to follow up with the **Hon. Kazombo**.

Prof. Tim Eden shared that he is part of a WHO group whose work includes seeking to **help respond to incidence of child cancers in Malawi**. Over 700 children each year die from one of the most common and readily curable cancers and Tim would be very keen to look at ways in which this could be remedied. The **Hon. Kazombo** expressed a desire to support and offered to work with Government officials and to help convene a meeting.

Heather thanked the Deputy Speakers and attendees and the meeting was followed by a round of networking over tea and Mzuzu coffee.