

Final



REMARKS BY MSGR. DR. PATRICK THAWALE, CHAIRPERSON OF PAC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, DURING A FOLLOW-UP INTERFACE MEETING WITH THE STATE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI, HIS EXCELLENCY, REV. DR. LAZARUS MCCARTHY CHAKWERA ON 18th JANUARY, 2022 AT 1:00 PM AT SANJIKA STATE HOUSE, BLANTYRE.

Your Excellency, Rev. Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, the President of the Republic of Malawi,

Your Excellency, allow me to express gratitude for accepting our request to dialogue with you as one way of making a follow up on governance and economic issues we deliberated on last year on 25th August 2021 at Kamuzu palace. That we meet here today once again demonstrates the commitment you made in June 2021 in the same Boardroom where you advised that Your Excellency is always open to listen to honest and frank views from our organization. Indeed, we bear testimony that you welcome our observations even though they are very strong and straight forward.

Your Excellency, at the outset I wish to take this opportunity to refresh your memory on PAC strategy as regards dialogue versus advocacy.

Your Excellency may recall that previously Heads of State and Government of our country complained about us for issuing Press Statements first in making observations, then later we book appointments with the State House. Since then PAC prioritized dialogue which is what we have been doing since 2012 so that we hear from the leadership on their side of the story. We did this by generating ideas through public dialogue (All-Inclusive Stakeholders Conference) let alone then we engage three arms of government and specific Ministries on specific issues relating to their jurisdiction. The second stage then PAC would take an confrontational advocacy approach if issues raised through public dialogue are not considered. With Covid-19 pandemic, PAC has not held public dialogue fora (All-Inclusive Stakeholders Conference) to consolidate a common position on issues of national importance. We are of the view that currently issues of national concern in this country are easy to follow despite failure to hold public dialogue fora. Your Excellency, you have good knowledge of All-Inclusive Stakeholders Conference because you have been part of them, especially that you attended the prominent one of 2012 at Limbe Cathedral with an outcome calling for resignation on the incumbent. In very crucial issues, Your Excellency, there are situations when PAC may go for advocacy and end up in dialogue with the State machinery. We explain this because it may be misinterpreted that our historical role through checks and balances by intensive advocacy has been abandoned.

SELECTED POSITIVE STRIDES

Your Excellency, first PAC notes that your administration has been successful on transparency. Openness in responding to criticisms and other issues of national importance has been one of the positive strides we can attribute to your administration.

Even on very contentious matters your administration has come out to clarify issues in spite that not all stakeholders have been satisfied.

Second, political tolerance as demonstrated by your visits to Former Heads of State symbolized an entry point for being open to contact and dialogue with people who hold different political views. Coupled with continuous existence of the Tonse Alliance which many doubted that it would last no longer than one year as it was bent on removing the previous regime manifests a high level of tolerance on your part and the part of other alliance partners. It is not easy to manage your internal party pressures, the party alliance and at the same time to run a government led by an alliance. There are a lot of competing interests in such a government.

Political accountability is the third positive development as exemplified by appearing before the parliamentarians to respond to questions on issues of national importance. The very reason that Your Excellency has been able to face parliamentarians and clarify your government's agenda is a satisfactory development in this regard.

The forth aspect worth noting is the ability of your leadership to let ACB, Office of the Ombudsman and other enforcement agencies to professionally operate independently. We observe in this regard that arrest of Cabinet Minister including Presidential Aide that were effected gave a ray of hope in the promotion of the rule of law – that everybody is equal before the law. ACB has to be congratulated for exercising its powers and should be supported in the discharge of its duties. This was seen as a positive element in the pursuit of the rule of law, although the public would like to see these matters completed to their finality. Your Excellency, the above positive strides are watered down by your approach or inaction to the following issues raised on 25th August 2021.

ISSUES FOR FOLLOW-UP

1. On Economic hardship

With due respect to explanations on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic and its implications on the economy Your Excellency, the public view seems to suggest that the administration lacks direction on the mitigation of economic hardship. We believe that in this area relevant Ministries that have a bearing on economic development ought to be aggressive in communicating to the public. It seems they have distanced themselves from their rightful role. Your Excellency may consider to package properly the information on economy to be imparted to the public, and your Cabinet Ministers ought to be in the forefront to defend and justify the economic status. This brings us to the next aspect we are following up.

2. Cabinet Reshuffle

During the previous interface meeting Cabinet reshuffle was deliberated on. We noted that Your Excellency you pledged to reshuffle the Cabinet by end of Year 2020. The pledge was religiously believed that an action in this regard would be effected. Despite our interface meeting with you, to date nothing has happened. This continues to erode trust that was bestowed upon you.

3. Nepotism

Your Excellency, your approach to appointments was one of the crucial issues that we discussed in August 2021. It appears to us that the public concerns on nepotism continue to grow with reports that your daughter reported for duties at the Embassy in the UK. Coupled with perceptions that your son-in-law doubles functions as Personal Assistant as well as Director of Communications compounds the situation.

Even if these officials have competences, this is Malawi Your Excellency, the public will never trust you especially that those participating in this allegedly nepotism are in the Office of the Presidency. Your moral standing becomes diluted.

4.Fight against Corruption and the Rule of Law

As highlighted earlier, positive strides were indeed registered in the drive against corruption. Your ability to let ACB and other enforcement agencies to arrest Cabinet Ministers and Presidential aide cemented the ray of hope that there was strong political will. However, contradictions have emerged in the manner you have treated Ministers of Energy , Newton Kambala, and Minister of Lands, Hon. Kezzie Msukwa, on allegation of corruption as compared to the way you fired Minister of Labour, Hon. Ken Kandodo. In this vein, these recent developments on the fight against corruption have cast doubt on your political will to deal with corruption in Malawi. Unfortunately, media stories on the investigation by British and Malawi officials into businessman Zuneth Sattar appears greater in size which could undermine the integrity of the current administration. Your Excellency may consider avoiding the use of selective justice in treating cabinet Ministers – especially on issues you are able to make decisions.

5.Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC)

Your Excellency, concerns continue to be raised over the ability of leadership at the helm of OPC. Your Excellency may consider appointing Secretary to the President and Cabinet acceptable by key stakeholders. You may appreciate strengths of your staff in strategic positions, but as long as they don't demonstrate that ability expected by key administrative players , the leadership is likely to face criticism.

6. Affordable Input Programme (AIP)

Obviously, PAC welcomes any programme that uplifts lives of the poor Malawians. In the AIP we observe usual logistical challenges in the execution of the programme such as delays in procurement. Your Excellency, the Government may wish to consider a review exercise which could guide the direction of AIP in terms of its sustainability or define its exit strategy in light of the budgetary constraints we face as a nation.

OUR CALL

Your Excellency, understand us right. We would like to collaborate with you where we feel you are doing the right things. Secondly, in no way, we hate anybody in their personal capacity. Your Excellency, governments run on taxpayers money. Therefore players in democratic governance have every right to hold you accountable. Let us call spade a spade today, Your Excellency reshuffle the Cabinet and appoint competent Secretary to the President and Cabinet. Consider changes in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well, for there seems to be reputational challenges. In fact, the current Cabinet seems to be a spectator in their leadership style. A number of them lack gravitas and influence. For instance, this is the time those occupying rightful roles in economic arena should have been in the forefront of translating and explaining measures to mitigate economic hardship. Their silence is loud enough. We kindly call upon Your Excellency to consider reshuffling the Cabinet within 3 months. The public patience is running thin.

Your Excellency, the current term of office is five years. Swift decision-making process is required. Indecisiveness on reshuffling the Cabinet, the revelations that your daughter assumed duties at the Embassy in UK,

failure to make public Public Sector Systems Review Report submitted to you by the Vice President, and failure to fire Ministers allegedly involved in corruption as you acted on Hon. Ken Kandodo has led Malawians to brand your leadership as tainted with lies and corruption.

Your Excellency, although in the introductory part we appreciated your open door policy to dialogue with us and others, it should not be interpreted that PAC will continue holding dialogue without seeing actions being taken. We would opt for second level dialogue in form of All-Inclusive Stakeholders Conference with a developmental agenda should indecisiveness continue.

The trust on Your Excellence has been eroded so fast as a result of your approach to decision making. In fact, you made mistakes on day one of appointing your Cabinet, coupled with failure to honour the pledge on reshuffling the Cabinet.

Finally, Your Excellency, you are unique in the sense that you are the first leader in this position that requested us that we should be frank and honest with you in our dialogue exercise. Such a virtue is not common among leaders. And that is what exactly we have done today – to be frank with you.

Thank you Your Excellency,

God Bless

