



AFRICAN LEADERS

State of Africa
Report 2009

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APARC and Its Mission

Since the 1990s, a number of sub-Saharan African countries have been making significant strides in furthering democratic and free-market reform. These changes reflect the vision and dynamism of the present generation of African leaders in those countries.

The African Presidential Archives and Research Center at Boston University (APARC) is collecting documents that chronicle this phase in Africa's development, taking a multidisciplinary approach to teaching about Africa, and

establishing a forum for African leaders to engage other political, business, academic, and public-sector leaders regarding Africa's global relationships.

To learn more about the center or to receive additional copies of this report, please contact the Boston University African Presidential Archives and Research Center, 141 Bay State Road, Boston, Massachusetts 02215, 617-353-5452, aparc@bu.edu.



From the Director

The *African Leaders' State of Africa Report* is a publication of the *African Presidential Archives and Research Center* (APARC) at Boston University. This *Report* was conceived with the intention of providing a vehicle for African heads of state to offer their viewpoints on current trends and developments in their countries as well as on the continent. As the eighth *Report* in the series of this document, the 2009 *Report* is a part of the running commentary on the direction in which the continent is headed.

The context and content of each year's *Report* has its emphasis, and this year is no different. As we were doing the preliminary work for this edition, the world was in near panic because of daily news about the economy, which was quite dire, to say the least. In the months leading up to the publication of this *Report*, I was in Johannesburg, South Africa, which is not only the financial capital for South Africa, but also the major money center for the continent. Among the meetings I attended during this particular visit were a number with some of the major financial institutions in the country. In those meetings, I got a couple of responses when I asked about the economic crisis gripping the world, and its implications for Africa. The first, which was rather obvious, was that South African

bankers were at their wits' end like everyone else. No one in the room was old enough to remember the Great Depression, nor was there the institutional memory that would help make sense out of the economic mess of the moment. So, they were worried like the rest of the world.

I found the second response to my question interesting and unexpected. The additional point that they made was that Africa's financial institutions—that is, those indigenous to the continent—have historically been marginalized in the global economy. That's the bad news. The good news is that relative to the most recent global economic crisis, Africa's financial institutions have historically been marginalized in the global economy. What that meant relative to the current crisis was that they were insulated because of that isolation. African financial markets were more liquid than those in the Western world. For Africa, this was something very positive. What this solvency suggested was that going forward, the financial architecture of the continent represented a solid foundation on which Africa could build.

While it is good that Africa's financial sector dodged the bullet from the world's faltering banks, other areas of Africa's economy won't be so lucky. Lessening demand because of a battered global economy will certainly adversely impact Africa's burgeoning textile industry. Tourism is another sector that will take a significant hit. Despite this, there could be a silver lining in these dark clouds. Left with fewer market alternatives internationally, Africa should explore its market potential internally. The sixteen African countries my Center tracks have an aggregate population of well over 650 million people. That represents an impressive potential market, and African entrepreneurs would be wise to seek ways to service its needs. The potential businesses that could be born and jobs created would be a tremendous boon to Africa's growth and development. Every crisis has in it at least one opportunity; the recent economic crisis presents Africa with a few.

In each of the contributions from the heads of state to this volume, some form of the point I

just made is reflected in their assessments of conditions in their countries and on the continent. While storm clouds still hover over the world's financial markets, the sun is still rising for African economies. Is it shining as brightly as in years past? No! But, all of the countries featured in this year's *Report* are experiencing positive growth. That is good news indeed.

Each year a lot of thought goes into the design of the *Report's* cover. The challenge is to try to have it symbolize a theme that is reflected throughout each edition. This year's *Report* has on its cover tumultuous seas, with a reflection of ticker tapes of the world's financial markets. The rising sun, with a silhouette of Africa, is meant to reflect Africa's promise despite global conditions. The cover design was chosen because we feel it is true to the reality and sentiment reflected herein. Do the signs of hope identified in this *Report* suggest that there will not continue to be fits and starts as Africa charts a forward looking path? No. Progress is never linear. Does the growing list of capable African leaders mean that corruption will become yesterday's news? No, simply because hope sometimes gets trumped by human nature. Just because Africa is headed in the right direction, does it mean that there will not be setbacks? No. Human progress is never even, or without its problems. What this year's *Report* is meant to convey, and more importantly, what Africa's commentary is on its progress, is that after the dark midnight of stagnation, Africa is rising!



Ambassador Charles R. Stith,
Director, African Presidential Archives and
Research Center at Boston University, and
Senior Editor, *African Leaders State of Africa
Report 2009*
Boston, Massachusetts
February 2010

Foreword

It is a privilege to be a part of history and introduce readers to the eighth edition of the *African Leaders State of Africa Report*. I vividly remember having a discussion with Ambassador Charles Stith years ago about the importance of the *African Presidential Archives and Research Center's* (APARC) work. I am convinced that leadership is a high calling, and being able to marshal the collective leadership of former and current African heads of state to discuss and problem-solve critical world issues is absolutely essential.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through the Africa Education Initiative (AEI), has partnered with APARC for six years now. This strategic partnership has allowed us to engage leaders on the world's stage, present workable and viable solutions, implement best practices, and provide opportunities for today's thought leaders to engage students representing the next generation of leadership on the African continent.

The *African Leaders' State of Africa Report 2009* highlights the challenges some countries are facing in Africa, the tremendous commitments to positive and systemic change in democratic societies, and the importance of developing agendas that focus on education, youth, and molding future leaders. APARC tracks sixteen countries on the continent, and there is no confusion among leaders about the importance of education. In 2009, APARC held the *African Presidential Roundtable: Leadership Challenges of Land Reform in Africa* in Berlin, Germany. German President Horst Köhler hosted a working luncheon for the former African heads of state in attendance. They and other dignitaries discussed some of the most pressing issues facing Africa's current and future leaders. The former dignitaries were joined by more than 150 participants from the United States, Europe, and Africa, as well as thirty-three students and fifteen faculty members representing seven universities of the *American-African Universities (AAU) Collaborative* sponsored by USAID. I received wonderful feedback from the



students and faculty members who attended. Many said that in spite of the troubling global economy, they are convinced that the future of Africa is bright, and the world's view can't help but turn a collective eye to the enormous resources and opportunities on the continent.

Of course, Africa has been deeply affected by the global recession; however, there has been an explosive growth of technology that is critical to Africa's future. Initiatives such as the AEI, which has a huge footprint on the continent, help to drive the passion and determination that young people have to learn and make a difference in Africa's future. Also, Africa is rich in oil and natural resources, and African leaders are learning how to harness those resources not only for the good of Africa but for the good of the world. According to reports from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), there is increased optimism that the African economy will be better off this year. The IMF predicts that the continent will regain a 4 percent growth in 2010. These predictions represent thoughtful and strategic leadership.

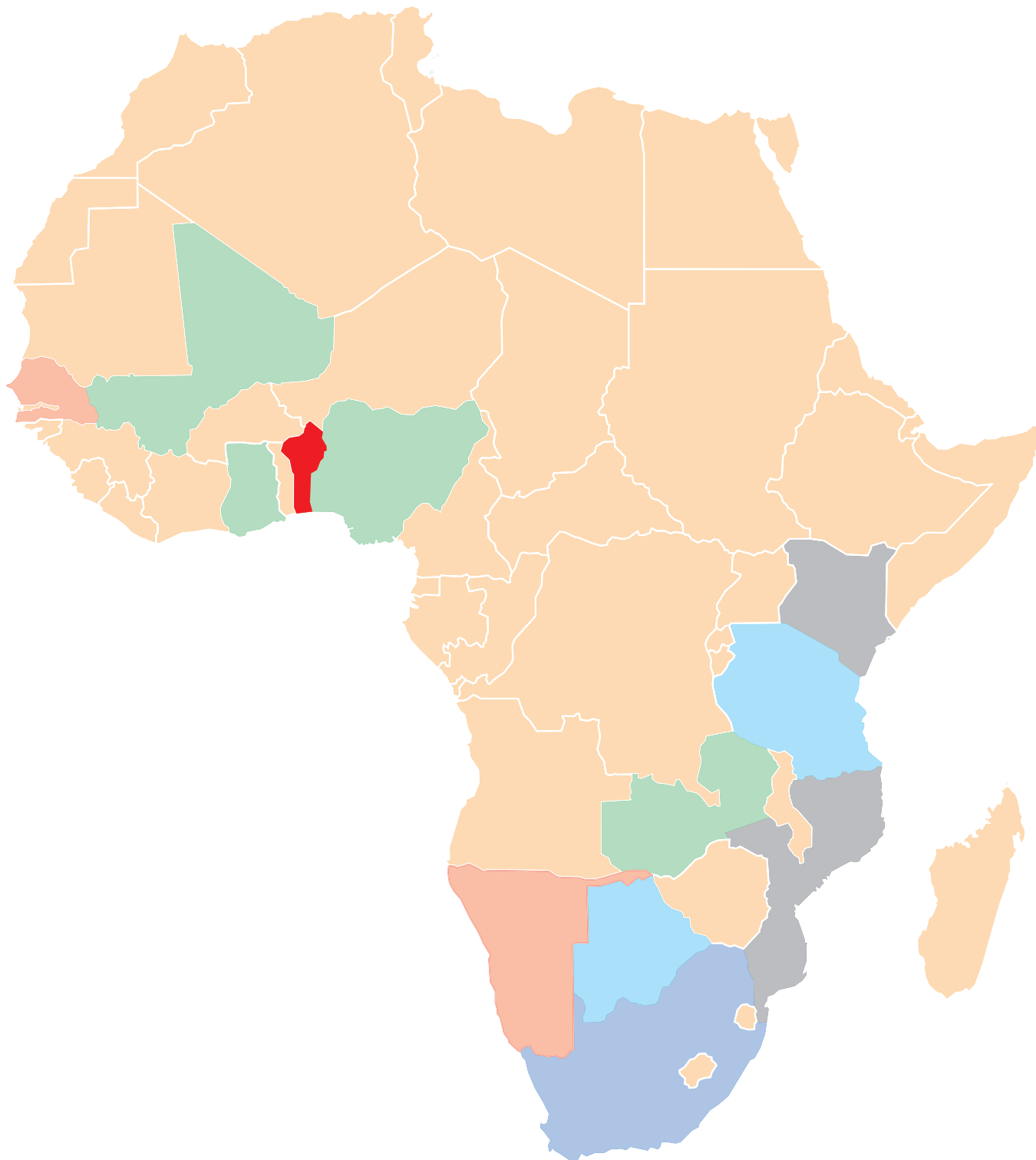
This year's *State of Africa Report* is a great resource and information tool for global leaders. It represents a repository of information with ideas and opportunities for future discourse on complex issues. I am hopeful that the *Report* will spark imagination and encourage continued dialogue among current and future leaders

concerning Africa's future and the ways in which global societies and economies are affected by Africa's development, political strategies, technological advances, governance issues, election systems, economic development, and the absolute necessity of quality education.

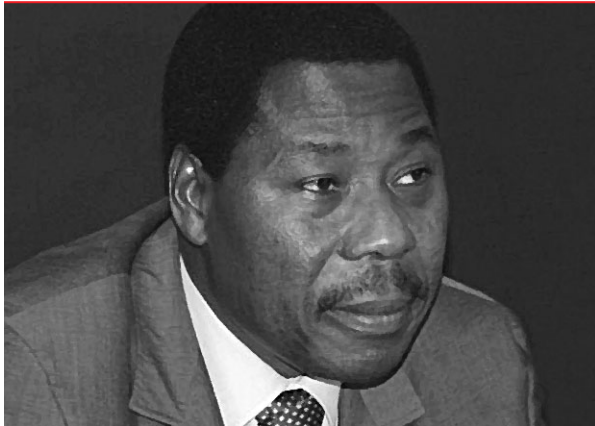
This *Report* is essential reading to all in positions of leadership.

Sarah E. Moten, Ed.D.
Chief, Education Division
U.S. Agency for International Development
Office of Sustainable Development
Washington, D.C.
January 2010

BENIN



BENIN



**State of the Nation Address by
His Excellency Dr. Boni Yayi,
President of the Republic of Benin,
to the National Assembly
Porto-Novo, Benin
December 30, 2008**



Mr. President of the National Assembly,
Mr. President of the Constitutional Court,
Mr. President of the Supreme Court,
Madame President of the High Court of Justice,
Mr. President of the Economic and Social
Council,
Mr. President of the High Authority of Audio-
visual Broadcasting and Communication,
Mr. Grand Chancellor of the National Order
of Benin,

Ladies and Gentlemen Members of the
Government,
Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen
Heads of Diplomatic and Consular Missions,
Representatives of International Organizations,
Honorable Deputies,
Wise Leaders and Notables of the city of
Porto-Novo,
Heads of Religious Confessions,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am happy to once again find myself in the
Palace of the Governors of Porto-Novo—this
revered place in the political history of our coun-
try and the seat of our National Assembly—to
address the nation through the Honorable
Deputies, and in doing so, keeping with Article
72 of our Constitution of December 11, 1990.

Mr. President of the National Assembly,
Honorable Deputies,

I would like to express my profound gratitude
for your warm and solemn reception. I would
also like to thank the presidents of the institu-
tions of the republic, the notables, and the wise
elders of the city of Porto-Novo, as well as the
chiefs of religious confessions, who have agreed

to join with us on this exceptional occasion, the third such occasion since the end of 2006.

Your Excellencies,

Members of the diplomatic and consular corps,
Representatives of international organizations,

Your presence at our side is proof of your commitment to our people and of your esteem for our invested efforts to improve living conditions for the citizens of Benin. I therefore ask you to accept recognition and gratitude from the nation of Benin for your constant efforts towards our country's economic emergence, in our quest for progress and social well being for one and all. Please convey our sincere thanks to your leaders.

Mr. President of the National Assembly,

Honorable Deputies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The year 2008 was special in many regards, because government faced a particularly difficult international economic context. The government had to rise to the occasion and handle three major exogenous shocks because of the unfavorable international environment: namely the petrol crisis, the alimentary crisis, and the financial crisis.

The petrol crisis emerged in 2007. The price of a barrel of crude oil had gone from \$56.50 in January 2007 to \$98 at the end of the same year, constituting an increase of 73.6 percent. This increase continued and reached a record of \$150 per barrel by July 2008.

The world alimentary crisis was caused by several factors, the principal ones being:

- the reduction of the global supply of cereal grains due to natural catastrophes that producers suffered in certain countries;
- the fabrication of biofuels based on certain cereal grains, which reduced the already insufficient supply of those grains in the face of an increasing demand; and
- climatic disruptions resulting from the intensification of climatic changes observed during the last few years.

At the national level, this alimentary crisis was accentuated by the lowering of cereal production due to inadequate rainfall in the north and substantial speculation in local markets.

The financial crisis, born from the sub-prime mortgage market in the United States, rapidly propagated through all of the important international financial centers before transforming into an economic crisis unequaled since the crisis of the 1930's. The financial center of Cotonou was practically untouched by the stock market crisis, particularly because of the solidity and the quality of regional regulation and surveillance. However, the global recession constituted a major threat for our country, whose economy was already fragile due to the petrol and alimentary crises. The contraction of world demand, the decline in prices paid for raw materials (notably cotton), the decline of foreign direct investment and public aid for development, and the drying up of the money transfers back home by migrant workers will, in fact, bring the stability of the macroeconomic framework to an end.

Mr. President of the National Assembly,

Honorable Deputies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The government's response in the face of these crises was, first, of a conjunctural quality, to protect the purchasing power of the citizens of Benin, and second, of a structural quality, to find permanent solutions for them. Thus, in the first half of 2008, we have seen the same trends relative to the importation of primarily alimentary products and the promotion of the production of local products taken in November 2007. In this setting, the government agreed not to collect a portion of the fiscal revenues from certain imported products in order to contain the increase of domestic prices. This exceptional financial effort is equivalent to more than 90 billion CFA Francs, or more than 16 percent of the fiscal revenues.

In addition, an emergency program aimed at supporting alimentary security was implemented to increase the availability of local agricultural products. It aimed first to promote the short growing season of vegetable production—particularly potatoes, rice, corn, and vegetable garden

products. Secondly, it aimed to reinforce the storage capacities in the production zones, which have provided a marketable surplus.

Beyond this emergency program, the government committed itself to elaborating a strategic plan for renewing the agricultural sector, aimed at diversifying and improving domestic agricultural production. Putting this into practice will make it possible, in the medium term, to guarantee durable alimentary security in our country, and to involve Benin's private sector in the global marketing of food products.

On July 14, 2008, I organized a national consultation on the high cost of living to gather citizens' opinions about the actions carried out by the government to curb the petrol and alimentary crises.

Mr. President of the National Assembly,
Honorable Deputies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Taking an accurate measure of this unfavorable international economic environment, my government has resolutely committed itself to implementing the Strategic Orientations of Development (2006-2011), with the perspective of constructing our economic emergence in a peaceful, political, institutional, and social framework.

In an effort to reinforce democracy and consolidate the state of law—a preoccupation shared by the entire Nation—I would like to rejoice over the peaceful succession of events that characterized the elections of April 2008, notwithstanding the breakdowns recorded during the organization of those operations.

In order to render credible the electoral process in our country, I asked the Commission of the European Union to carry out a feasibility study concerning the implementation of the Permanent Computerized Electoral List (LEPI). The final report, taking into consideration the observations of all participants in the electoral process, was submitted to me on December 10, 2008. The preliminary actions required to implement the LEPI require the mobilization of 16 billion CFA Francs, which should be committed in March 2009.

In the same vein, I assembled a national commission to reread of the Constitution, which is presently engaged in the completion of its report. The final report will be distributed to the National Representation and to the other institutions of the Republic, as well as to the representatives of all the political and social forces of our country for examination as soon as it is available. An awareness campaign relating to this draft of our fundamental law will be organized throughout the national territory.

Mr. President,

I believe that our country will not flourish unless there is a climate of national peace and concord. My government reaffirms its availability to participate in a national political dialogue. We also extend our hand to all of the institutions of the Republic, and to all political parties and movements, in pursuit of reaching a necessary consensus for the construction of our country.

In addition, following the presentation of the Benin Evaluation Report carried out under the African Peer Evaluation Mission (MAEP), my government elaborated on a plan of action to take on the principal challenges identified therein. This plan of action explains the immense expectations of the population of Benin, as well as its hope for a brighter tomorrow. In this regard, I have established the National Governance Committee—an autonomous structure made up of high-level Benin citizens, who share an exemplary moral record and are equipped with a proven level of professional experience—in order to reinforce democracy at its base and to accompany the government in implementing this plan of action.

In order to launch a truly concerted effort to solve the problems confronting our fellow citizens, I have established the High Commissariat for Concerted Governance, a privileged tool of participatory governance and for democratic consolidation. The success of the national forum on “The Realities of Poverty in the Face of the Challenges Represented by the Millennium Development Objectives” illustrates perfectly the usefulness of this authority. Indeed, this forum,

organized in October 2008, identified the needs of the populations that had to be considered in implementing development programs.

Our country will develop in a secure climate. In this regard, in the hope of assuring security to people and their belongings, and also for the protection of institutions, my government set out to define a strategic plan of public security for the years 2008 to 2013, and to organize:

- daytime and nighttime patrols;
- certain “punch” operations in areas particularly conducive to crime;
- the dismantling of several “mafia” networks that had become quite professional in illicit trafficking and banditry; and
- raising the consciousness of local elected officials and populations with the goal of getting them to participate in the management of security issues.

All of these actions made it possible to improve the security climate for the citizens of Benin. I acknowledge that a great deal still remains to be done. The good will of the government, the determination and the courage of the defense and security forces, as well as the reinforcement of logistic support, are the preconditions to our achieving better results.

I seize this occasion to express to the defense and security forces once again, the confidence and support of the nation for their loyalty to the Republic and their very active participation in the tasks relating to socio-economic development and in the operations for the maintenance of peace in several countries of the world.

I would like to reiterate my compassion and that of the entire nation for the victims of the armed attacks on Dantokpa market on April 1 and November 21, 2008. In this regard, the government has taken the necessary steps and envisions other measures in order to:

- organize adequate infrastructures for security;
- increase the number of security forces;
- reinforce and modernize materials and equipment; and

- increase the operational capacities of the security forces to confront and counter criminality in all of its forms.

Honorable Deputies,

The reconstruction of a public administration in the service of development also remains an essential imperative for launching our economy. In order to promote the culture of a republican administration, freed of its political and partisan practices, the government has created an allocation system for high level technical employment.

Central directors, technical directors, and other high non-political offices of the civil service, will from now on be assigned after a rational selection process, based on the criteria of competence and performance objectives. In this light, a complete description of the required abilities for each employment group has been created and made publicly available.

The government also committed itself to improving the conditions of service and remuneration for the permanent agents of the state. In this regard, it proceeded with a 5 percent salary increase, to match the increased cost of living, which will take effect as of January 1, 2008, following the 7 percent increase in 2007. In addition, beginning in October 2008, bonuses have been harmonized in all of the ministries. With respect to social measures, there has been a reconversion and a taking on of salaries and various bonuses for contractual and community teachers, as well as agents serving in sanitary education. The government has also proceeded with an increase of the monetary incentive for teachers representing 25 percent of the basic salary structure, equivalent to a salary mass of 6.7 billion CFA Francs.

These figures show that my government has made substantial efforts in favor of social partners and has performed massive transfers to the benefit of public enterprises and of the private sector. Out of 100 Francs of collected revenues, 80 Francs have served to assure, first, the financing of salaries, pensions, and social measures, and second, the transfers to support public enterprises and the private sector of expenses for functioning

and the public debt, Therefore, there remains only 20 Francs to assure the financing of investments, which must play the role of stimulus for growth. This situation could never be maintained in 2009 unless we redouble our efforts, in the hope of creating wealth and increasing the rate of economic growth in a significant way.

Mr. President of the National Assembly,
Honorable Deputies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the level of cleaning up the macroeconomic framework and the maintenance of its stability, the dynamism of economic activity has led to accelerated growth, in spite of the petrol, alimentary, and financial crises. The rate of economic growth estimated for the year 2008 is 5.1 percent as opposed to 4.6 percent in 2007. This performance results from: the improvement of agricultural production, other than cotton; the pursuit of our policy for investing in large infrastructure projects; and from support of consumption, thanks to the economic measures taken to fight against the high cost of living. The consolidation of economic growth has been achieved in an inflationary environment. The average rate of inflation for 2008 is estimated at 8.3 percent as opposed to 1.3 percent in 2007, due to the surge of prices for alimentary and petrol products during the first half of 2008.

In the same vein, my government is purging salary arrears by distributing financial securities to benefit the permanent civil servants of the state. In summary, Benin is one of the rare countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) to not have debts vis-à-vis the suppliers of production equipment. Our exterior debt is on the order of 12 percent in relation to the gross domestic product; added to the interior debt, it is at 20 percent in relation to the gross national product instead of the 70 percent established according to the performance criteria of the UEMOA. In all, the debt capacity of Benin is still intact and the treasury is sufficient to permit our state to meet its sovereign engagements and obligations.

In the framework for the promotion of economic renewal, the government has pursued the

implementation of structural reforms. The goal is to transform the structures and the national economy's mode of management to thereby move from an inadequately diversified and insufficiently productive economy to a state of accelerated development. In this respect, structural reforms are intended to:

- re-center the role of the state on its more noble missions;
- improve the competitiveness of the economy by making the factors of production available in quantity, in quality, and at a lower cost;
- consolidate the stabilization of public finances;
- reinforce economic governance and pursue the fight against corruption;
- transfer the management of the tools of production from the public to the private sector in order to make them function in a more optimal manner, to create wealth and to establish a public-private partnership, a true instrument of a new dynamics of development; and
- attract foreign direct investment.

During 2008, seeking a new approach to reform the production chain of cotton, my government proceeded first to implement partial cessation of the industrial tool of the National Society for Agricultural Advancement (SON-APRA) via the creation of the Society for the Development of Cotton (SODECO), and second, by constituting an Agricultural Input Purchasing Center (CAI), a partnership between the state, the importers, the distributors of input, and the local banks.

By creating these two mixed-economy mechanisms (SODECO and the CAI) and reorienting the activities of SONAPRA, the government has made clear the option of a dynamic win-win public-private partnership to bring reforms to the cotton sector while supporting itself each time on a governance agreement framework that focuses on agricultural development, the creation of wealth and new employment opportunities, and the development of the territory.

In addition, the government has ceded its shares in the Continental Bank of Benin. This operation allowed the entry of the United Bank of Africa (UBA), the leading bank of West Africa, into Benin's financial market. This diversification will have a positive impact on the performance and development of the financial and banking sectors of Benin in the coming years, while at the same time integrating the banking system of the sub-region. Beyond this, the processes of opening up the social capital of Benin Telecoms SA and of the disengagement of the State of Benin from the Onigbolo Cement Society are well under way.

The Autonomous Port of Cotonou, one of the pillars of Benin's economy, is a central link in transportation, which must underlay the economic emergence of the country. Some important investments are planned for its modernization, with a goal of increasing its sub-regional competitiveness. In this respect, to improve the performance of the Port of Cotonou and to optimally exploit the opportunities resulting from the geographic position of the country, the government has solicited the services of the International Financial Society to prepare for opening the two quays, whose construction is planned by the program MCA-Benin. The assistance of the Soil Fertility Initiative (SFI) will begin in January 2009. The SFI, a subsidiary of the World Bank Group responsible for promoting the private sector, has a good deal of experience advising and assisting governments of emerging countries in the implication of the private sector and the restructuring of public and para-public enterprises, notably in the sector of shipping ports.

Mr. President of the National Assembly,
Honorable Deputies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Promoting economic renewal results from the availability of high quality infrastructures, a precondition to any development on the national scale. This is why the government insists on its policy for large-scale projects. In this regard, in the realm modernizing the road network and reinforcing the competitiveness of the Benin corridor and thus the economy of Benin, the government has initiated two large road projects, for

a total estimated at more than 70 billion CFA Francs. These principal road projects concern:

- the reconstruction of the westward exit from Cotonou, the crossroads of Godomey-Abomey-Calavi, a project of 10.5 km, which was launched on October 15, 2007;
- the development and the paving of the road from Kétou to Illara, a distance of 16.5 km, officially launched on January 25, 2007, has already been completed. The definitive reception of the work took place on October 21, 2008;
- the reconstruction of the road from Pobé to Kétou, a distance of 36.5 km, begun on March 13, 2007, and is expected to last 36 months;
- the development and paving of the road from Kandi to Banikoara, which is practically completed. The definitive reception of the work took place on October 28, 2008;
- the development and paving of the road from Djougou to N'dali, a distance of 125 km, begun on May 14, 2007 and expected to last 24 months;
- the development and the rehabilitation of the road Comé-Possotomé-Bopa-Zoungbonou, a distance of 43 km, which began October 28, 2006 and will be completed by January 31, 2009; and
- the work on the development of the road Akpro Missérété-Dangbo-Adjohoun-Bonou-Houinhi-Kpédékpo, a distance of 89 km is being pursued in spite of difficulties.

In all, 306.5 km of paving is planned on the 6,076 km of our national road network, of which 1,821 are presently paved. There still remains a great deal to do in order to improve the road network and to facilitate the development of trade and exchange, both internal and external. This is why my government is determined to work on the development of second-generation infrastructure.

In addition, to increase the mobility of people and goods in the city of Cotonou, the construction of two raised sidewalks at the crossroads of Houéyiho and Steinmets has been initiated, at a

total cost of 15 billion CFA Francs. These worksites, established in 2007, are completed; each of them was recently delivered to the public. Beyond that, construction work on the interchange of Godomey has just been launched in partnership with the People's Republic of China.

In the air transport sector, a program of modernization, reinforcement, and development has been negotiated, with a particular focus on the rehabilitation and development of the final infrastructure and installations for the airport platform of Cotonou. In addition, work on the construction of the airport of Tourou, a project worth 27 billion CFA Francs, was launched on December 15, 2008. The realization of this airport, designed to receive predominantly air freight, falls into the framework for sub-regional integration and the implementation of a main artery for transport, including the modernization of port infrastructure, the construction of dry docks, the improvement of governance at the autonomous port of Cotonou, and for the required renovation of the railway system. This will also make it possible to reinforce the city of Parakou's critical role as a regional economic center.

Concerning socio-economic infrastructure, I would like to insist on the project to extend the Dantokpa Market, the construction of the Chinese commercial center in Ganhi (for which we completed the inauguration on December 16, 2008), and the forthcoming start of the construction of the markets of Natitingou, Kandi, Djougou, Dassa-Zoumé, Agbangnizoun, Asové, and Allada.

Mr. President of the National Assembly,
Honorable Deputies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the realm of reinforcing education, my government has undertaken a program for the construction of six thousand new classrooms in order to better manage the fact that nursery school and primary education are now free to everyone. Important strides have been made in teacher recruiting for all levels of education. In order to confront the specific lack of teachers in nursery schools, my government has decided to

integrate specific training classes for such categories into the teacher training schools.

With an eye to assuring equitable access to higher education for all students completing their training in general or technical secondary education—who express such a desire—the government has decided to admit and register students, even without scholarships or support, into the various faculties. This action has been accompanied by the construction of amphitheaters and laboratories in the national universities of Benin.

We must combine our efforts in order to maintain the standard of our teaching establishments, and particularly in higher education, where tranquility and peace are indispensable to the acquisition of knowledge, because the economy of the Twenty-first Century is one of knowledge and technology. My government counts on each one of us to ensure such an environment on all of our university campuses.

The insertion of the poorest people into the production circuit is essential in order to have shared prosperity. In this regard, my government is pursuing the implementation of a program of micro-credit for the poorest, in order to reinforce the autonomy of women through revenue-generating activities. Thus, more than 500,000 of our compatriots, divided up in all of the communes of our country, without any exclusion or discrimination, have been able to benefit from this program reaching a total sum of 15 billion of our CFA Francs.

Young people, a vital force of the nation, are one of the major priorities of my government. To create an efficient means for supervision, my very first law proposed to our august assembly was law number 2007-27 of October 23, 2007, instituting military service in the national interest. This became a reality on the ground with the first class of 3,000 youth designated “The Class Hope,” and which has just completed its mission on December 27, 2008.

This mission, it should be remembered, made it possible to develop in the hearts of our youth, democratic citizenship values, respect for the law, authority, and public assets, and an active spirit of national solidarity. This in turn made it possible

to curb to a certain degree the shortages in teaching and health personnel in our cities and villages throughout the entire national territory.

One of the major concerns to my government is the struggle against youth unemployment, and the active contribution of youth to the nation's development. The National Fund for the Promotion of Enterprise and Employment among Youth, operational since January 2008, has financed more than 600 projects totaling 5 billion CFA Francs, which generated more than 3,500 jobs. The perspectives for employment in the agricultural and artisan sectors are becoming more and more precise.

Some job-creating projects have been identified in all of the communes of our country. The program for the development and the exploitation of the valleys of Benin, for a total of approximately 6.5 billion CFA Francs, will make it possible to fight against rural exodus through jobs created in our villages. Some specific programs at the level of the National Agency for Employment have made it possible to train more than 1,200 young people with the goal of then inserting them into the fabric of the national economy.

In the domain of culture, my government has taken important measures to reinforce the aid fund for culture whose total sum went from 300 million CFA Francs to 1 billion CFA Francs, including funds for the promotion of our national languages in order to reaffirm the cultural identity of our people.

Mr. President of the National Assembly,
Honorable Deputies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the framework for equitable and durable development of the national space, I set up a commission charged with proposing a new system of geographical division of the national territory. In addition, my government has been progressively implementing a system for creating conditions in the communes that are ideal to grassroots development.

To accelerate progress toward the realization in 2015 of the Millennium Development Goals, my government has begun work on the realiza-

tion of a Millennium Villages Project, whose objective consists of helping the rural communities to identify some practical strategies for reducing poverty through an increase of infrastructure and of human capital, while encouraging equality between the sexes and environmental durability. This project, in its first phase, covers twelve village communities fairly distributed across the entire national territory. It proposes, therefore, simple solutions, such as furnishing seeds that produce a high return, fertilizers, medications, establishing drinking water points, and construction materials for classes and dispensaries, which enable the communities to enter into a new era where good health and new opportunities are within their reach.

My government has registered all of its interventions using a decentralized strategy in keeping with the strategic framework of the National Policy for Decentralization/ Deconcentration (PONADEC), whose contents bring together decentralization, deconcentration, and development of the territory in order to promote grassroots development.

I therefore invite the communal and municipal councils to elaborate their development plans, taking into account the Strategic Development Directions and the local situation at the social, economic, and financial levels. To facilitate their implementation, my government established a support fund for the Development of Communes (FADEC), of which the initial endowment of 1.4 billion CFA Francs in 2007 has now been increased to 5.4 billion in 2008.

From a diplomatic point of view, our country has recorded indisputable successes. Indeed, our diplomatic corps, through the different regions of the world, has made it possible to reinforce the status of Benin in the concert of nations, and to increasingly arouse the interest of the international community in favor of our country. The visit of President George W. Bush, the first visit to Benin by a sitting United States president, is one of the important results of our development diplomacy. The June 2008 organization in our country of the summit of the Heads of State and of Government of the CEN-SAD, and of the

first extraordinary summit of the member countries of the Mechanism for African Peer Evaluation (MAEP) in October 2008 are beautiful illustrations of this.

The validation by the Heads of State and of Government of the MAEP Forum, and of the Report on the Evaluation of Governance in Benin and the plan of action relating to it, elaborated by my government, constitutes a true success.

Mr. President of the National Assembly,
Honorable Deputies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

To enable our economy to draw profit from all actions that are undertaken by my government—with the help of technical and financial partners, as by the other Institutions of the Republic, and the different Communal and Municipal Councils—we owe it to ourselves to unite in order to consolidate this environment of peace and concord to which other countries aspire. This aspiration is regularly portrayed in conversations that I have had with the actors in political, social, and religious life as well as the organizations from civil society.

I remain willing to listen to you, and to know and to understand your preoccupations. I remain firmly attached to our communal vision to make Benin a peaceful and emerging country so that in cohesion, solidarity, and fraternity, the nation will rise to the numerous challenges that have been identified, and those that will arise in the future.

The real challenge facing our country is that of economic and social development, and its realization depends on a consensual political framework dealing with our most important national issues. Thus the moment has come to close the understanding gap between the state and its youth, through training and employment programs. The moment has also arrived for us to seriously tackle the problems of the rural areas through the development of the agricultural sector through a program of targeted public investments, through the participation of rural populations in defining their needs in local infrastructure, and through their participation in the realization and maintenance of appropriate projects. It is therefore a question of giving a suitable

political dimension to grassroots development, which is the indispensable complement to a macroeconomic policy of quality.

The year 2009 will thus be dedicated to giving substance to this policy orientation of my government. I am asking the Municipal and Communal Councils to prepare for this. In the face of these challenges, the strategic orientation of our development remains most relevant. The diagnosis confirms the necessity on the one hand of improving the competitiveness and the productivity of our economy, in an effort to accelerate growth, and on the other hand to reduce the occurrence of poverty. In this perspective, the economic policies of the government in 2009 will be concentrated on the acceleration of growth and the dynamization of the private sector. More specifically, the government intends to state in the structure of its sectoral investment plans, its strategic development vision via the “Agenda for an Emerging Benin.”

Mr. President of the National Assembly,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Presidents of institutions of the republic,
Honorable Deputies,
Honorable Guests,

The construction of our country—its transformation into an emerging country with shared prosperity—is an ongoing task. It is an immense task, given its numerous challenges. It is an enduring task, given that it calls on each one of us daily. It is in unifying our strengths that we will be able, with courage and determination, to confront and conquer the great challenges of our time. Each citizen of Benin, at whatever level of society he or she be stationed, must make his or her contribution to the task of constructing our nation.

It is thus with this renewed appeal to the union of all of the vital forces of the nation that I would, at the dawn of the year 2009, extend to each and every one of you my sincere wishes for health, peace, happiness, and prosperity.

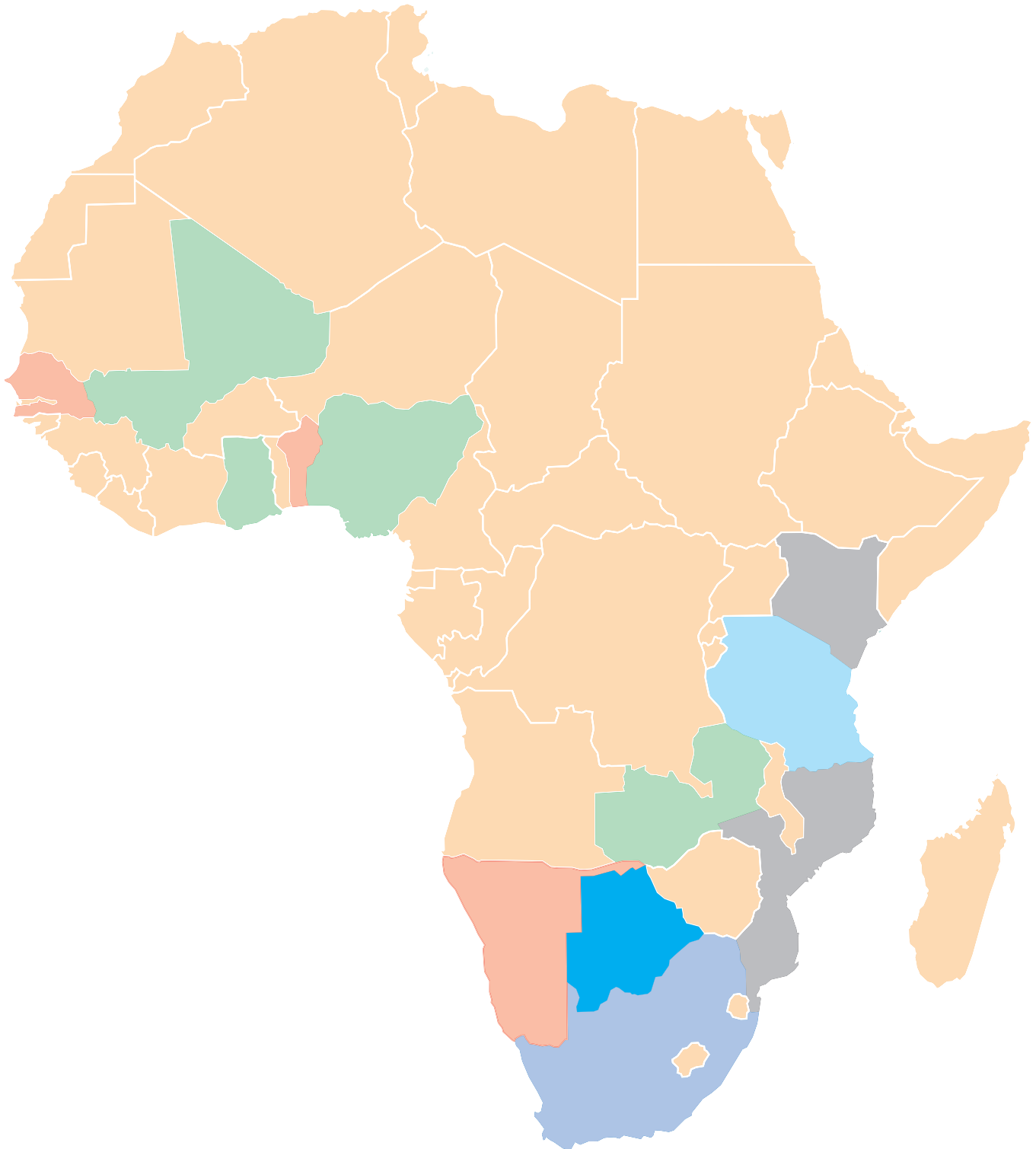
Long live the Republic!

Long live Benin!

May God bless our country!

I thank you.

BOTSWANA



BOTSWANA



**Speech by His Excellency
Lt. Gen. Seretse Khama Ian Khama,
President of the Republic of
Botswana, on Botswana Day
September 29, 2009**

My fellow citizens, it is again my pleasure to address you as we mark the Forty-third Anniversary of our independence as a sovereign republic.

On this day, while spending time with family and friends, we can proudly celebrate the fact that the progress we have made in establishing a better Botswana over the years has been a product of our collective efforts and understanding. Similarly, sustaining this progress and overcoming the many challenges we still face will require shared commitment and mutual responsibility.

In a vibrant democracy such as ours, an important responsibility is the right and duty to vote. In this regard, today's anniversary comes at a time when we are approaching our tenth national election. On October 16th, men and women in every corner of our land will once more have the opportunity to freely choose their political leadership.

On that day, we will undoubtedly be divided in our choices. Yet, in casting our ballots, we will also be united in our commitment to sustain the democratic values and practices that have sustained us thus far. Our peaceful voting in free and fair elections has come to define who we are, as well as where we want to go, as a society united in its diversity and confident of its capacity for further progress.

I, therefore, take this opportunity to appeal to all of you who have registered to vote, to go out and exercise your right to choose by casting your ballot on polling day. This is why I decided to declare October 16th a public holiday this year, to enable citizens to have time away from their work to cast their vote. I was, therefore, perturbed to hear that over 37,000 citizens may miss

this once-in-every-five-years opportunity, simply because their Omang Cards [national identity cards] have either expired or new ones have not been collected.

Let us remember that those who will be elected shall, from that moment on, be representing the hopes and aspirations of all of the voters in their constituencies, irrespective of political party affiliation.

Our democracy remains rooted in our adherence to the Constitution, which is the legal guarantor of our collective responsibilities to each other as fellow citizens, as well as the individual liberties we all enjoy. I hereby rededicate myself to respecting the Constitution, as I did during my inauguration, and appeal to all Batswana to do the same.

Fellow citizens, let me at this juncture urge you all to be mindful of the fact that it is our shared destiny to compete as a relatively small state in a much bigger world where wealth is created through international trade and investment, as well as domestic production.

Bagaetsho, commitment to democratic ideals and voting in free and fair elections are not sufficient on their own to sustain us. We need to work very hard to be productive and build a robust economy. The ongoing global recession is a reminder of how vulnerable we are in this respect. In order to succeed as a nation in this fast-paced world, we must become more globally competitive, by setting goals and standards that are truly world-class. This, in turn, requires us to adopt a more productive approach and mindset both within government and society as a whole.

May I also remind you that this is the month when we annually rededicate ourselves to achieving our long-term *Vision 2016*. The outgoing Parliament has just passed the Tenth National Development Plan, which will take us forward to 2016. It is for this reason that the Plan's goals and anticipated outcomes are linked to the achievement of our *Vision 2016* Pillars.

As we go about implementing this plan, we need to appreciate that the burden of national development does not rest on the shoulders of government alone. The onus is on all of us to

achieve our desired outcomes. Let me conclude by once more affirming my own confidence in our collective ability to overcome our challenges while achieving our highest aspirations.

As we approach another rainy season, let us again pray to God that He will once more bless our land with good rains.

And when it does rain, let us show our gratitude by applying ourselves seriously to tilling the land and making our fields bountiful with fruits of His blessings.

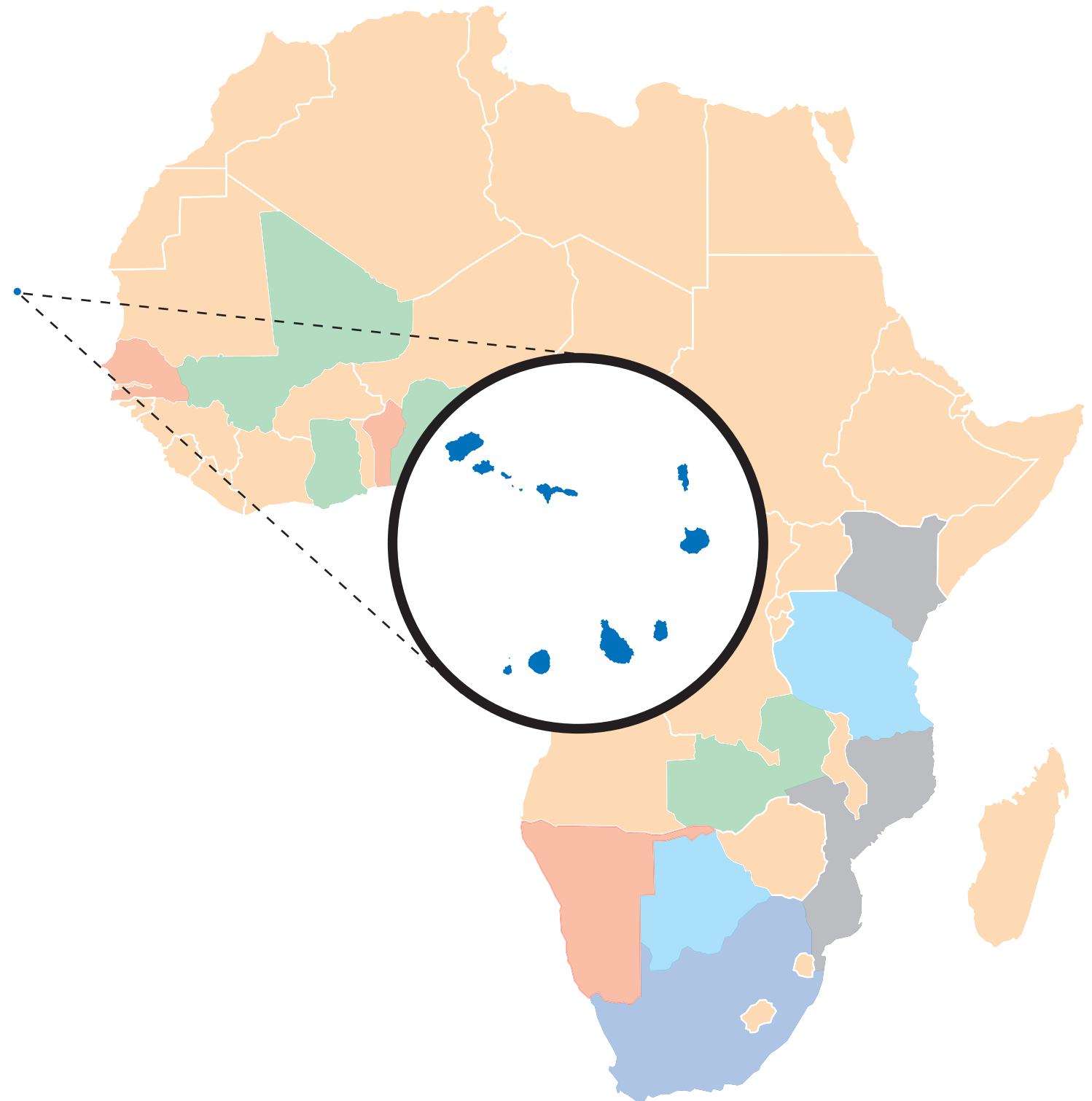
May all of us enjoy a happy and safe Forty-third Independence Anniversary, while rededicating ourselves, with God's guidance, to collectively strive for a more perfect society in this imperfect world.

PULA!

PULA!

PULA!

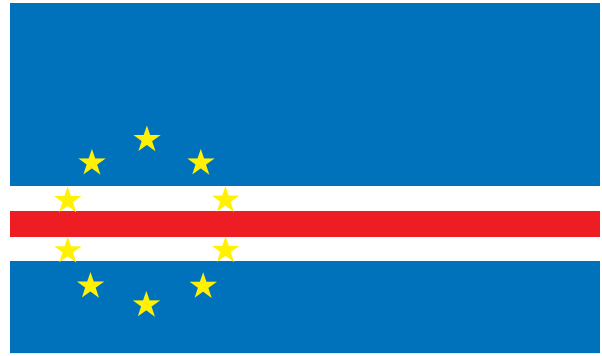
CAPE VERDE



CAPE VERDE



**Speech by His Excellency
Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires,
President of the Republic of Cape
Verde, on the Commemoration of
the Thirty-Fourth Anniversary of
National Independence
Main Hall of the Palace of the
National Assembly
Praia, Cape Verde
June 5, 2009**



This day constitutes, in reality, the central support of our nation. It is a unifying factor and a mobilizer of the national will. It reflects our greatest aspiration to liberty and national sovereignty. It rewards a secular struggle for the affirmation of our national identity and culture, the dignity of our countrymen, the advancement of our human capital, and the material prosperity of our islands. Without a doubt, we feel proud to celebrate it with confidence and happiness.

The first decade of the Twenty-first Century will end in a way, perhaps, that is less than we had hoped; we are in the middle of a severe financial and economic crisis, in which the values and rules that dominated in the past have been abandoned.

At this time, everything that is happening is on a grand scale, both in terms of the dimensions of the global crisis and the hopes awakened by the election of new leadership for the presidency of the United States of America.

This year, for the first time after sixty years of continuous expansion, the global economy will experience negative growth. It is appropriate to be concerned about the punishing impact of this situation on the economies of the poor countries. These countries should not be the only ones to bear the increased costs of a crisis whose causes originated in other areas. Thus, it is just for poor countries to call for their fair treatment. Already, as a consequence of the crisis, the number of victims of hunger has surpassed one billion, which is extremely severe.

Moreover, the countries of Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC), which represent half of the world's population and 23 percent of its

gross domestic product (GDP), have generated in the last few years, in the words of President Lula da Silva of Brazil, “65 percent of the world’s economic growth,” and have thus become the main source of hope for a rapid recovery from the global recession. These countries aspire to play an important role in resolving the crisis and in the process that will lead to the reconfiguration of the financial and economic structure, as well as the governance of the world, which will surely take place. ^[1]

Africa, which in the last five years had a growth rate above 5 percent, will likely have a much lower rate this year of about 3 percent. It is a significant change for the dynamics of our economies and revenues. We are left with the challenge and the obligation to act so that the global crisis does not compromise the economic progress that has been achieved in the last few years.

For some analysts, there are already indicators and encouraging signs of the start of recovery of the economies of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. When it occurs, it will be the spark for the principal engine of recovery and will have very favorable repercussions for the global economy in general.

In spite of the specter of the financial and economic crisis, promising and encouraging signs have appeared at the international level. International relations are more extensive and more focused on achieving greater confidence among the principal international political actors. More democratic, balanced, and participatory relationships are developing. There is greater respect for others and for cultural and civil differences. And, more care and preventative behavior is being observed with regard to the challenges, risks, and threats that confront the world and the planet. At last, a multipolar world that permits greater participation and a more balanced sharing of powers and responsibilities among the states is emerging. There will certainly be greater attention paid to the common interests that unite humanity. This could be reflected in the promised reform of the United Nations (UN), which has been much anticipated.

Our progress as a sovereign nation, as well as long before this, has always been a difficult battle, a persistent effort, and a constant challenge. The challenges of today follow this line of continuity. In the course of our history, nothing has been easy or free for us.

We have survived and conquered various obstacles and constraints, whether material, human, or political. Our achievements are the fruit of ingenuity and much perseverance. And, in the near future this will continue to be the case. We should get used to it, as it is precisely these difficulties that will shape our personality and temper our spirit of resistance and struggle.

Our country is also buffeted by the effects of the crisis. We find ourselves facing great challenges. Even so, the complexity of some of these problems should not disorient us. Our economy has functioned better than many others, which should serve as both a comfort and a stimulus for our future.

Still, in our projects, we cannot fail to keep in mind the fragilities and limitations of the country. We are small in terms of population and territory. Our access to labor is limited. All of this requires good sense in our aspirations; balance, prudence, and *savoir-faire* in the management of our activities; and the ability to learn, in time, the reasons and effects of the things that happen. We should be able to move smoothly from the enthusiasms of the “time of fat cows” to face with intelligence and wit the restrictions and complexities of the “time of thin cows.”

The achievements of our country are evident in the most diverse areas of national life, as well as in very delicate areas. With the development we have already achieved, we have changed the face of our islands, which has brought some human and material difficulties along with our growth.

Our triumphs and possibilities remain. It is important now to continue to arm the country to face the “post-crisis” in a condition to win and to achieve greater competitive capacity. In our favor, Cape Verde is, for many analysts and shapers of international opinion, one of the most optimistic faces of Africa.

^[1]Opinion Article in *EL PAIS*, 06/16/2009.

In particular, the United States Senate has just recognized the important role of Cape Verde in the Middle Atlantic—the area of the fight against transnational drug trafficking. Although we have made significant gains, it is necessary to continue to perfect the laws relating to organized and transnational crime and to improve our operational police capacities. This is one of the areas that has achieved the full cooperation of the driving political forces in the country. In addition, the difficult situation that prevails in our West African region requires much attention and the strong commitment and skill of our specialized services.

I am concerned about the impasse that has been reached in the process of the “Revision of the Constitution.” As an issue of inter-institutional loyalty, my opinion regarding this subject is the following: it is not reasonable that, with two mandates, the deputies and the parliamentary groups have not yet been able to reach an acceptable compromise for a useful and timely revision of the Constitution, which is otherwise fully justified.

As a result, it is imperative to make a constitutional revision that will improve the governability of the country, provide stability of governance, improve the conditions for national security, and enhance the means for combating transnational criminal activity.

In order to ensure that conditions continue to exist for the advancement of a constitutional revision, I hereby state my insistence that a compromise to permit its completion be found because it is necessary.

Throughout our existence we have reaped the benefits of being the holders of a very rich culture, and in these past few weeks this richness has been validated, as it was recognized internationally on two different stages. After the poet Arménio Vieira had been very justly awarded the Camões Prize, a few days ago we saw the confirmation that our *Cidade Velha* had been inscribed on the list of the cultural heritage of humanity by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Cape Verdean literature in Portuguese has in Arménio Vieira one of its greatest contributors,

and as the Portuguese language is one of the pillars of our cultural heritage, the prize should serve as a stimulus for Cape Verdean writers, whose works have contributed so much to the enrichment of the language called “official,” making it into a living, dynamic language that is influenced by the day-to-day life of these islands.

For us, as Cape Verdeans, *Cidade Velha* was always part of the heritage of humanity and the source of our Creole identity, of universalism, and of globalization. As a consequence, it is a part of memory that we must preserve and value.

As a point of union among peoples from four continents, *Ribeira Grande de Santiago*, rather, *Cidade Velha*, was the midwife for a mix of cultures, engendered by people of various origins. From this synthesis originated, in my opinion, another culture that forged a genuinely Creole people who, among other things, invented our mother tongue and wove together a way of being that is optimistic, happy, and courageous. As a pioneering experience, it could even become an excellent laboratory for study by social scientists.

Cidade Velha also has great historical importance for the collective memory of Africa, and not only is it necessary to meditate on its significance, but also, the consequences that it had for the African continent, along with Europe and the Americas. Moreover, the classification of *Cidade Velha* as part of the cultural heritage of humanity constitutes a historical and cultural recognition of our origins as a people and the value of our culture, and is an important stimulus for the strengthening of our historical awareness.

With this recognition, our responsibilities have increased. But, I am convinced that all of the national, political, and cultural actors, who worked with great confidence and tenacity to achieve the desired objective that has now been reached, will know how to fulfill these new responsibilities and the resulting challenges of this prestigious universal classification.

As Cape Verde is a country whose natural resources are scarce, it is essential to cultivate all of the alternative means that are capable of advancing our development. Today, more than ever, this development, which we hope to sustain,

becomes irreversible thanks to our greatest resource, our culture.

I know that this important; intangible wealth constitutes an important added value, as in the past few years and in a consistent manner, the average growth rate of the economy of culture in the world has been higher than the growth rate of the economy in general. It means, then, that we possess a great quantity of gold and diamonds waiting to be refined.

CABO VERDE

Discurso Por Sua Exelência

Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires,

Presidente da República de

Cabo Verde

Praia, Cabo Verde

5 de Julho de 2009

Este dia constitui, na realidade, o esteio central da nossa Nação. É um factor unificador e mobilizador da vontade nacional. Traduz o que foi a nossa aspiração maior à liberdade e à soberania nacional. Gratifica uma luta secular pela afirmação da nossa identidade e cultura nacional; pela dignidade dos nossos conterrâneos; pelo progresso do seu capital humano e pela prosperidade material das nossas ilhas. Sem dúvida alguma, nos sentimos orgulhosos em celebrá-lo, em confiança e alegria.

A primeira década do século XXI vai terminar da forma, talvez, menos esperada: no meio de uma grave crise económico-financeira, enquanto valores e regras, antes dominantes, mostram-se esgotados.

Neste tempo, tudo o que vem acontecendo é em grande escala: tanto a dimensão da crise mundial como das esperanças despertadas pela eleição da nova liderança na Presidência dos Estados Unidos da América.

Este ano, pela primeira vez, depois de sessenta anos de aumentos sucessivos, o crescimento mundial vai ser negativo. Legítima a preocupação, quanto ao seu impacto penalizante sobre as economias dos países pobres. Estes não devem ser os únicos a suportar os elevados custos de uma crise, cujas causas geraram-se noutras paragens. Logo, é lícito que os países pobres reivindiquem tratamento em conformidade. Para já, em consequência da crise, o número de

vítimas da fome ultrapassa um bilião, o que é extremamente grave.

Outrossim, os BRIC, que representam metade da população mundial e 23% do PIB, têm gerado, nos últimos anos, nas palavras do Presidente Lula da Silva, do Brasil, 65% do crescimento mundial, convertendo-se na principal esperança para uma rápida recuperação da recessão mundial. Ambicionam um papel importante na saída da crise e no processo que conduzirá à reconfiguração da arquitectura económica e financeira e da governança mundiais, que certamente vai ter lugar. ^[1]

A África que, nos últimos cinco anos, teve um crescimento acima dos 5%, deverá registar, este ano, um crescimento muito inferior, em torno dos 3%. É uma quebra apreciável de dinâmica económica e de rendimentos. Restam o desafio e o compromisso de agir para que a crise mundial não comprometa os progressos económicos conseguidos nos últimos anos.

Para certos analistas, já há sinais indiciadores e encorajadores do início da recuperação das economias dos países da OCDE, o que, acontecendo, seria o arranque do motor principal da retoma e teria repercussões muito favoráveis na economia mundial, no geral.

Diferente do espectro da crise económica e financeira, sinais promissores e encorajadores despontam no plano internacional: as relações internacionais estão mais distendidas e em busca de maior confiança entre os principais actores políticos internacionais; relações mais democráticas, equilibradas e participadas; mais respeito pelo outro e pelas diferenças culturais e civilizacionais; maior cuidado e prevenção para com os desafios, riscos e ameaças com que se confrontam o mundo e o planeta. Está a emergir, enfim, um mundo multipolar que permitirá mais participação e partilha mais equilibrada de poderes e responsabilidades entre os Estados. Vai haver, certamente, maior atenção aos interesses comuns que unem a Humanidade. É o que poderá reflectir a prometida reforma da ONU, de há muito esperada.

A nossa marcha, enquanto país soberano, e mesmo muito antes disso, tem sido sempre uma

^[1]Artigo de Opinião no *EL PAIS*, 06/16/2009.

batalha árdua, um esforço obstinado e um desafio constante. Os desafios de hoje vêm nesta linha de continuidade: no decurso da nossa história, nada nos tem sido fácil ou grátis.

Sobrevivemos e vencemos obstáculos e constrangimentos diversos, sejam materiais, humanos ou políticos. Os nossos ganhos são frutos do engenho e de muita perseverança. E, nos próximos tempos, assim vai continuar a ser. Devemos nos acostumar, pois, são precisamente estas dificuldades que moldaram a nossa personalidade e temperaram o nosso espírito de resistência e de luta.

O nosso país é também sacudido pelos efeitos da crise. Colocou-nos face a grandes reptos. Contudo, a complexidade de alguns dos problemas não deve desorientar-nos, quando a nossa economia se tem comportado melhor do que muitas outras, o que não deixa de ser reconfortante e, igualmente, estimulante.

Nos nossos projectos, não podemos deixar de ter em conta as fragilidades e limitações do país. Somos pequenos, em espaço territorial e humano. A nossa margem de manobra é limitada. Tudo isto requer bom senso nas nossas aspirações; equilíbrio, prudência e “*savoir-faire*” na gestão das nossas actividades; e perspicácia para apreender, a tempo, as razões e alcances das coisas que acontecem. Devemos poder passar, sem traumas, dos entusiasmos do “*tempo das vacas gordas*” para encarar, com inteligência e argúcia, as restrições e complexidades do “*tempo das vacas magras*”.

Os ganhos do nosso país são evidentes e nos mais diversos domínios da vida nacional, mesmo em áreas muito delicadas. Com o desenvolvimento já alcançado, mudamos a face das nossas ilhas, o que tem acarretado, por acréscimo, algumas dificuldades, humanas e materiais.

Os nossos trunfos e potencialidades mantêm-se. Importa, agora, continuar a armar o país para enfrentar a “*pós-crise*” em condições de vencer e em maior capacidade competitiva. Em nosso favor, Cabo Verde é, para muitos analistas e fazedores de opinião internacionais, uma das faces mais optimistas da África.

Neste particular, o Senado americano acaba de distinguir o importante papel de Cabo Verde,

no Atlântico Médio, no domínio do combate ao narcotráfico transnacional. Apesar dos ganhos evidentes, urge continuar a aperfeiçoar as leis relativas ao crime organizado e transnacional e, ainda, melhorar as capacidades operativas policiais. Esta é uma das matérias que vem reclamando, das forças políticas dirigentes do país, uma ampla cooperação entre elas. Além do mais, a difícil situação que prevalece na nossa região oeste-africana requer muita atenção, grande empenhamento e perícia dos nossos serviços especializados.

Vejo com preocupação o impasse que se regista no processo da Revisão da Constituição. Por uma questão de lealdade interinstitucional, a minha opinião sobre esta matéria é a seguinte: não é razoável que, em dois mandatos, os Deputados e os Grupos Parlamentares não tenham ainda podido chegar a um compromisso aceitável para uma revisão útil e atempada da Constituição, que, aliás, se justifica amplamente.

Com efeito, urge fazer uma revisão constitucional que melhore a governabilidade do país; proporcione a estabilidade governativa; melhore as condições da segurança nacional; e aperfeiçoe os meios de combate à criminalidade transnacional.

Por acreditar que continua a existir condições para se avançar com a revisão constitucional, deixo, aqui, a minha insistência em que se encontre o compromisso que permita a sua efectivação, porque é necessária.

Se, ao longo da nossa existência experimentámos, na prática, os benefícios de sermos detentores de uma cultura bastante rica, nestas últimas semanas, esta riqueza ficou revalorizada, pois, foi internacionalmente reconhecida em dois palcos distintos. Depois de o poeta Arménio Vieira ter sido muito justamente galardoado com o Prémio Camões, há poucos dias, vimos confirmada a inscrição da nossa *Cidade Velha* na lista de património mundial da humanidade, da UNESCO.

A Literatura cabo-verdiana em português tem em Arménio Vieira um dos seus maiores cultores, e sendo a língua portuguesa um dos pilares do nosso património cultural, o prémio deve servir de estímulo para os escritores cabo-verdianos,

cujas obras tanto têm contribuído para o enriquecimento da língua dita “padrão”, como de um português vivo, dinâmico e influenciado pelo quotidiano existencial destas ilhas.

Para nós, cabo-verdianos, a *Cidade Velha* sempre foi património da humanidade e a emanção da criouldade, do universalismo e da globalização, e em consequência, um lugar de memória a que urge preservar e valorizar.

Traço de união entre povos de quatro continentes, *Ribeira Grande de Santiago*, melhor, *Cidade Velha*, foi a *parteira* de um caldo de culturas, engendrado por gentes de várias proveniências, que da sua síntese originou, na minha opinião, uma outra cultura e forjou um povo genuinamente crioulo que, entre outras coisas, *inventou* a nossa língua materna e teceu, igualmente, uma forma de estar optimista, alegre e esforçada. Por ser uma experiência pioneira, até podia ser um excelente laboratório de estudo para cientistas sociais.

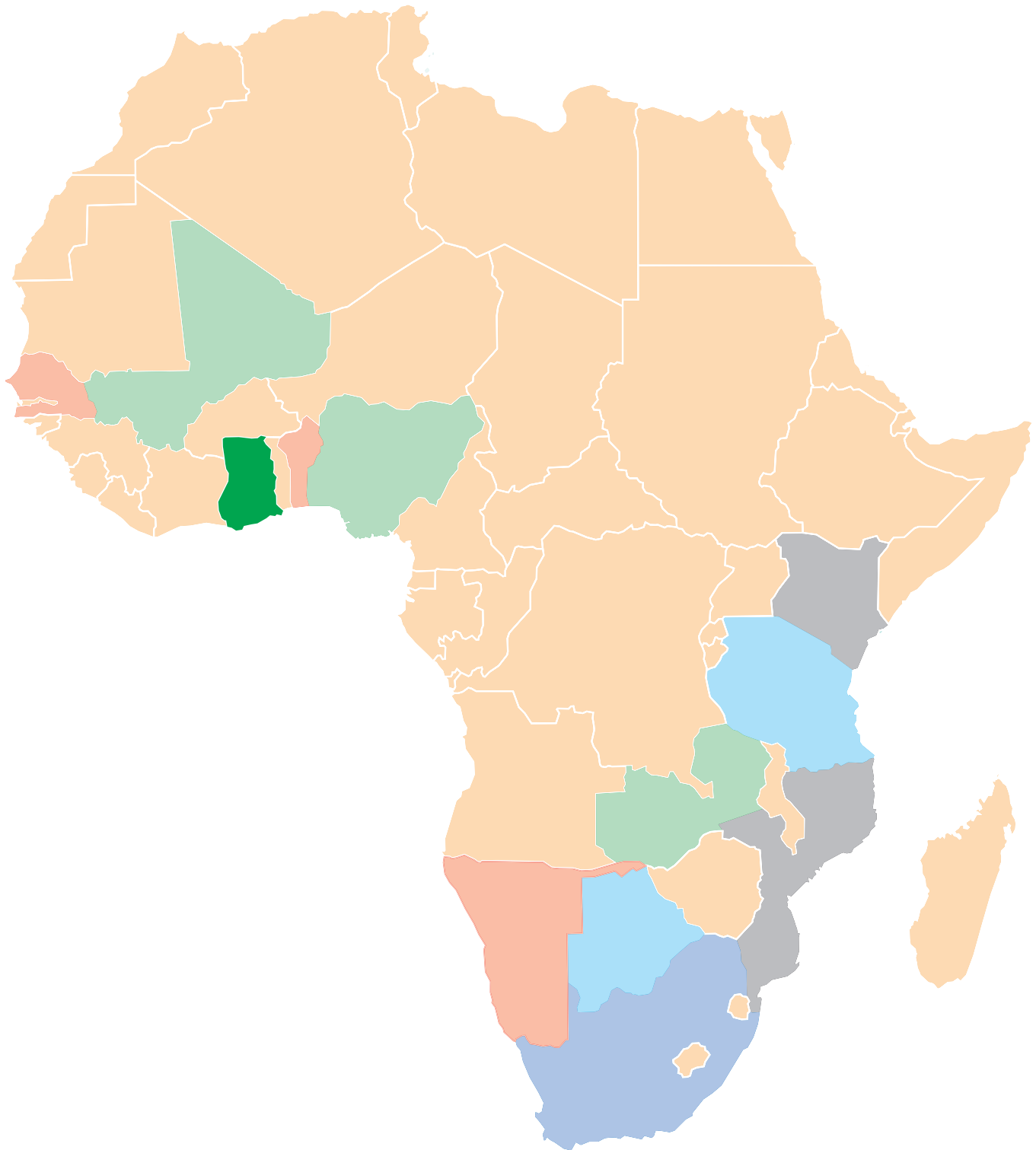
A *Cidade Velha* é também de uma grande importância histórica para a memória comum de África e não só. É preciso meditarmos sobre o significado e as consequências que ela teve para o continente Africano, para a Europa e para as Américas. Outrossim, a classificação da *Cidade Velha* como património mundial da humanidade constitui uma valorização histórico-cultural das nossas origens, enquanto povo, e é um estímulo importante para o aprofundamento da nossa consciência histórica.

Com este reconhecimento, as nossas responsabilidades ficam acrescidas. Mas, estou convencido de que todos os actores políticos e culturais nacionais, que trabalharam com muita confiança e afinco para conseguirmos o objectivo almejado, e ora alcançado, saberão colocar-se à altura das novas responsabilidades e dos desafios resultantes desta prestigiante classificação universal.

Tratando-se Cabo Verde de um país cujos recursos naturais são parcos, é mister potenciar todas as vias alternativas e capazes de alavancar o desenvolvimento. Hoje, mais do que nunca, este desenvolvimento, que se quer sustentado, passa de forma incontornável, pela nossa riqueza maior, que é a Cultura.

Entendo que este importante bem imaterial constitui uma importante mais-valia, pois, nos últimos anos e de forma consistente, a taxa média de crescimento da economia da cultura no mundo tem sido superior à taxa de crescimento da economia, no geral. Quer, enfim, significar que temos ouro e diamante de grande quilate, à espera de serem lapidados.

GHANA



GHANA



**State of Nation Address by His
Excellency John Evans Atta Mills,
President of the Republic of Ghana,
at Parliament
Accra, Ghana
February 19, 2009**



INTRODUCTION

Madam Speaker,
Thank you for receiving me in this august House session to present my first State of the Nation address to Parliament as President of the Republic of Ghana.

Madam Speaker,

As the first lady Speaker of Parliament, you occupy a unique position in our nation's history. It is a position of which you, and indeed all women of Ghana, should be justifiably proud. You exemplify the fulfillment of my wish to see Ghanaian women rise to assume even more prominent positions in our land. I wish you well, Madam.

I greet you, Honourable Members of both sides of the House, new Members, as well as returning Members. Together, you constitute a blend of experience and new perspective that should inure to the benefit of this House. The measure of the accomplishments of this House must be to the degree that its results benefit the nation. Ghana expects that you will work in the national interest. In a real sense, your work meets expectations only to the extent that it helps us build "A Better Ghana."

Madam Speaker,

Last December, the people of Ghana sat in judgment and ruled in favour of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and our agenda for "A Better Ghana." And, so I remind my brothers and sisters of the majority in this House of our obligation to keep faith with the people at all times. We should never forget the men and

women whose worries stretch from pay-day to pay-day.

I extend a hand of friendship to our brothers and sisters of the minority party. We must work together to fashion the requisite legislation that will help this country face and overcome her many challenges in these times of domestic and global uncertainty. In this quest, consensus building is vital, and time is very precious. True collaboration in this House must produce solutions that address Ghana's challenges in a qualitative and timely manner.

Madam Speaker,

Permit me to acknowledge my predecessors, President Jerry John Rawlings and President John Agyekum Kufuor. Ghana is indeed grateful to them for their service to our nation. We are also grateful to them for moving our democracy further along the path to maturation. As the third president in Ghana's Fourth Republic, I will play my part to add to their legacy.

We will learn as a nation to add to what is working and to change course only when it is in the national interest to do so. We will depart from the practice of undoing the valuable contributions of our predecessors. A house that is constantly rebuilding its foundation is doomed to remain stuck to the foundation level, never to reach completion and decoration, let alone occupation.

Ghana deserves better.

Madam Speaker,

Let me also acknowledge our first President, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, that illustrious founder of our nation. His selfless leadership serves as a point of reference in our determination to build "A Better Ghana." Incidentally, this year marks the 100th Anniversary of Dr. Nkrumah's birth, and as a nation we should commemorate the event in an appropriate and befitting manner. Among others, we intend to honour Dr. Nkrumah's memory with a national holiday—to be known as *Founder's Day*—and we will be presenting legislation to Parliament to this effect.

GOVERNANCE

Madam Speaker,

Our 1992 Constitution established a number of institutions to foster effective balance of powers; provide ample expression for the representatives of the people; and guarantee access to justice, human rights, independence of the media, and the right of the citizens to be empowered with knowledge about civic education. We will engage these independent governance institutions in a peer review of their conditions, and together with them, define the solutions that will propel them to fulfill their constitutional mandates, within reasonable limits of our national resource endowments.

I would urge this august House, through an appropriate amendment of its standing orders, to consider permitting the leadership of these important national institutions to at least appear in person on the floor of the House to defend their own budgets. That way, the criticism of the Executive starving them of funds will be a thing of the past.

Madam Speaker,

Transparency in government and the fight against corruption are cardinal for sustainable development. During this administration, we will address transparency through a three-dimensional approach:

- ensuring the passage of the Freedom of Information Act;
- expediting the passing of a National Broadcasting Act; and
- elaborating a Code of Conduct in Government that includes key information disclosure, ethics, and anti-corruption measures.

Together these measures will enable both citizens and statutory constitutional bodies to access the information needed to demand accountability from office-holders in the public and private sectors. Still, on legislation, we will endeavour to make sure that the Disability Act moves to the level of implementation.

Madam Speaker,

We promised many things in our Governance Reform Agenda in our *Manifesto*, and we shall systematically work to fulfil these. For this year, we have already delivered on our promise to establish a lean, but effective, government by realigning and reducing the number of ministries.

Regarding Parliament and Parliamentarians, we will embark on the following:

- The construction and furnishing of a standard “Member of Parliament Duty Post Office” in each of the 230 constituencies and the payment of an administrator appointed by the Member of Parliament to man the office;
- The establishment of a “Member of Parliament Constituency Development Fund” separate and apart from the District Assemblies Common Fund in order to release the District Assemblies Common Fund for the exclusive use of the District Assemblies and to remove one of the sources of tension between the District Chief Executives and the Members of Parliament; and
- The assignment of national service graduates to Members of Parliament as research assistants.

Madam Speaker,

Several areas of our governance agenda require legislative intervention. Fortunately, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) sponsored “Ghana Political Parties Programme,” which is made up of all the political parties with representation in Parliament, has agreed on several draft bills that will respond to this need. Consequently, the government will consider these draft bills for possible Parliamentary enactment in order to fill the void. The bills are:

- public Financing of Political Parties Bill, including the creation of an election fund for political parties and guaranteed funding for the Electoral Commission;
- a new Political Parties Bill; and
- a Presidential Transition Bill.

JUDICIARY

Regarding the Judiciary, Madam Speaker, we will ensure adequate collaboration without sacrificing the independence of the Judiciary and encourage their work such as to assure expeditious dispensing of justice to all. In this vein, government will support such developmental projects, law reform, and anticorruption initiatives, which will promote the dignity of our Judiciary.

Madam Speaker,

The Local Government Act of 1993 and the Local Government Service Act of 2003 will require extensive amendments to ensure that there is a national consensus on the direction and scope of these amendments. We will organise a broad National Stakeholders’ Conference on Decentralization this year to mark the twentieth anniversary of the existence of the District Assemblies and to make proposals for the amendments.

We believe also that a National Constitutional Review Conference is the surest way to ensure that our *Manifesto* promises, as well as those of some of the other political parties that require constitutional amendments, see fruition in a consensual manner. In preparation for this Conference, this year we shall establish a Constitutional Review Committee to collate views on amendment proposals and to work toward the Conference.

Madam Speaker,

Law and order, human safety and security, and protecting the people remain the cornerstone of our internal security policy. For far too long, governments have sought to provide for the security of the people without the involvement of the agencies responsible for security.

As an innovation, we intend to devote this year to holding a series of durbars with the officers and men of the Ghana Armed Forces, the police service, the prisons service, and the Customs, Excise, and Prevention Service (CEPS) to elicit from them directly and first-hand their concerns and needs. Those concerns and needs will be factored into both next year’s

State of the Nation Address as well as the 2010 Budget.

But even before that, we will be taking a close look at their present conditions of work and will be doing something in the very short-term to boost morale and improve efficiency. Our security agencies need to be motivated to combat crime and drug trafficking, protect law-abiding citizens, and defend the human rights of all Ghanaians.

The law-enforcement agencies must be uncompromising in their pursuit of those who violate the human rights of others. We will bring to closure the lingering issue of justice in the murder of Ya Na and his elders, Issa Molbilla, and all other such cases. We will also bring to closure investigations into high profile narcotic trafficking cases and allow justice to serve as a deterrent.

MEDIA

Madam Speaker,
We will continue to respect the diversity and independence of the media in shaping opinion in our democracy. A credible media is reflected in the quality of information they process for the consumption of the public, and as a government, we recognize our responsibility to be accessible to the media in order to bridge the information gap. In the course of the year, I will begin a monthly/quarterly broadcast to the nation as part of measures to enhance interfacing with the citizenry.

In as much as we all value accountability of government and free expression, we expect the media to look at its own inadequacies and endeavour to reconnect with the mass of citizens and to live by the tenets such as its own ethical code and the constitutional obligations enshrined in the 1992 Constitution.

CHALLENGING GLOBAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Madam Speaker,
I have assumed office at a time of heightened anxiety and insecurity in the global economy. As we speak, the whole world has been gripped by

the severe global economic downturn and associated recession. Millions of jobs have been lost in many countries.

The financial meltdown has defied logic and economic rationality. As things fall apart, institutions of global economies and financial management are under enormous stress. Such is the gravity of the crises that no nation can traverse these hard times alone, nor can we blame any one person or government for causing this. The world needs a radical re-thinking of the rules, institutions, and processes for global, social, and economic management.

For the developing world, the initial impact has been volatility in commodity prices and reductions in foreign aid and remittance flows from citizens working abroad who lost their jobs. There is imminent danger of substantial reduction in economic growth.

While the exact impact of these changes on our economies are yet to be determined, it must be understood that the world as we know it has changed beyond recognition and we should not, and cannot, bank on previous arrangements, such as the generosity of donors, for our national survival.

Madam Speaker,

Over the last month of assuming office, an economic management team has been reviewing our domestic situation thoroughly. The reality, as we have found out, calls into question previous assertions that Ghana is doing well in spite of the global economic crisis.

Let me highlight the fundamentals of our current economic status and predicament:

- The fiscal deficit, meaning the excess of expenditure over revenue, was GH¢2.5 billion in 2008. This figure is over 15 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). In layman's terms, we have spent a great deal more than what we earned.
- The external deficit or balance of payments for 2008 is estimated at GH¢3.42 billion, or 18 percent of GDP. Here too, it means that we owe our foreign creditors far more than is fiscally prudent for an erstwhile Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC).

- The rate of inflation accelerated from 12.7 percent at the end of 2007, to 18.1 percent at the end of December 2008.
- In the space of two years—i.e. between 2006 and 2008—our stock of external debt increased from \$2.2 billion to \$3.9 billion. This contributed to an increase in the overall national debt from \$5.3 billion in 2006, to \$7.6 billion in 2008. And this is in spite of the over \$5 billion debt write-off enjoyed by the country from 2001.
- Over the last few months, the cedi has lost substantial value with respect to the U.S. dollar, which is attributed to the delayed effect of excessive spending and trade imbalances we have experienced since 2006. We have used up foreign exchange resources, which have accrued from various debt relief arrangements to shore up the value of the cedi.

In recent months, as the foreign exchange inflows have dried up, the cedi has come under enormous pressure. Indeed, the decline in the value of the cedi is negating benefits that could otherwise have accrued from low world crude oil prices.

We are resolved to achieve an early restoration of stability in the foreign exchange market. This requires that we cut down our import bill, increase exports, manage our finances carefully, and live within our means.

Honourable Members must join me in managing this period of economic difficulty. I assure you that we shall all benefit when the good times come, as they surely will. I am optimistic that the burden of sacrifice, if properly shared, will result in great opportunities and progress for the people of this country. I am committed to bringing the fiscal excesses under control. Without fiscal control, this country cannot pursue the aim of creating prosperity for our people.

We are working on a number of measures aimed at achieving macroeconomic stability in the budget. The Finance Minister will announce in detail the specific measures to be presented to Parliament shortly. The measures will include:

- reducing the state protocol budget by half;
- reducing the official foreign travel budget by half;
- reducing the official seminars and workshops budget by half;
- monitoring targets and dividends of state-owned companies and enterprises closely;
- reviewing the exemptions regime;
- increasing efficiency in revenue collection; and
- negotiating the single spine wages and salaries regime.

PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Madam Speaker,

It is largely the private sector—formal and informal, indigenous and foreign—that will be central in creating jobs and increasing government revenue through taxation. This will in turn fund social investments in roads, schools, and clinics, which the NDC government is deeply committed to delivering. It is the men and women in the private sector that my administration intends to partner with, to develop and grow, not only for the near term, but also for the longer term, to secure the future and well being of our people.

My pledge to the private sector is clear. This administration will build a robust economy and address the challenges the private sector faces in investing, growing, and expanding. The private sector development agenda will be driven and monitored at the heart of government business—i.e. at the presidency. This is a promise I made to the private sector and this government will translate it into action.

Madam Speaker,

In my address to the Economic Retreat at Akosombo a few weeks ago, I argued the concept of “justifiable continuity.” This nation must stop the discontinuities in planning that result from changes in governments. Too often new governments have stopped, without justification, observing due process, projects, or programmes that previous administrations initiated. As a result, there is a huge amount of money to be paid in

respect of local and international legal rulings against the Government of Ghana. In conducting the business of government, we will be guided by these experiences. Whenever we consider it to be in the national interest, we will renegotiate agreements using established procedures.

Madam Speaker,

I am making sure that expenditures by the Presidency do not constitute an undue burden on the Ghanaian taxpayer. I will impose austere measures throughout the government machinery to ensure that we realize significant savings. As part of these measures, we will review the decision to purchase two executive presidential aircrafts. Ghana simply cannot afford the expenditure at this time, and we certainly do not need two presidential jets.

Agriculture

Madam Speaker,

The government will invest adequately to increase the production levels of basic food crops. We will also put in place measures to significantly increase the production level of staple crops for which consumption demand exceeds domestic production.

The Aveyime Rice Project will be restored to boost rice production for both internal consumption and export. We will move beyond rhetoric and execute a programme to rehabilitate existing irrigation schemes to ensure their efficient utilization. We will construct additional dams, boreholes, and other water harvesting facilities in areas with high agricultural potential. The Accra Plains Irrigation Project will be vigorously pursued to make it available for year-round production. It will be the flagship of the agricultural revolution of this administration.

Madam Speaker,

Government will pursue a policy of direct intervention to make production inputs available on credit for small farmers. In addition to the credit support, government will continue the fertilizer subsidy programme.

Government will review all existing agreements on fishing within Ghana's territorial waters to ensure that the livelihood and long-term interests of our fishermen and the residents of the coastal communities are guaranteed. Government will also enforce the prohibition of the unorthodox fishing methods currently used by some foreign and local fishing trawlers, because they are leading to the depletion of our marine fish resources. We will enhance the capacity and capability of the Ghana Navy and Air Force to enforce the prohibition.

Cocoa

Madam Speaker,

Government will aim to increase the yield of cocoa from 1,250kg to about 1,750kg per hectare through better farm management, application of high-tech production systems, and better producer prices.

In pursuance of the objective to process locally at least 60 percent of the total cocoa produced, the NDC Government will begin negotiations for the establishment of a cocoa processing factory in the heart of the cocoa producing area of the Western Region. This will reduce the burden of transporting large quantities of cocoa beans to the ports.

TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Madam Speaker,

Starting with our decision to merge all transportation-related ministries—except Roads and Highways—under one Ministry of Transport, we are beginning the process of harmonizing our infrastructure development toward a common purpose of accelerating our national development effort with national unity and regional integration as twin-purposes.

To this end we propose to fast track:

- the West Africa Transport and Transit project, which will improve sections of the central corridor from Kintampo to Paga;

- the Eastern Corridor project, which will improve the Tema-Hohoe-Nkwanta-Yendi-Tamale Road links;
- completion of the Bole-Bamboi road, and continue works on the entire western corridor road project linking Elubo in the Western Region to Wa in the Upper West Region; and
- implementation of the road projects supported by the Millennium Challenge Account.

HEALTH

Madam Speaker,
During the 2008 campaign, I made several commitments to the health sector because I am of the conviction that the health of our nation is the wealth of our nation.

The National Health Insurance Program will be enhanced and expanded. The one-time National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) enrollment fee is still an achievable goal, and we will work to make the scheme truly national. In place of the current District Mutual Health Insurance Scheme, to which one must pay an annual premium, we will seek to implement a Universal Health Insurance Scheme, which will reflect the universal contribution of all Ghanaian residents to the Scheme. The NHIS will be restructured to respond to the needs of the population, and to resolve the issue of claims management and portability. We will also pursue the policy of delinking children from their parents and the provision of free maternal care.

Health Infrastructure

Madam Speaker,
The implementation of the following planned projects will commence:

- rehabilitation and upgrading of the Tamale Teaching Hospital;
- construction of a 100-bed general hospital with a Malaria Research Centre at Teshie;
- construction of a regional hospital with staff housing at Wa;

- construction of six district hospitals with staff housing at Adenta/Madina, Twifo-Praso, Konongo-Odumase, Wenchi, Tapa, and Salaga;
- construction of two district hospitals at Bekwai and Tarkwa; and
- the second phase for the rehabilitation of the Bolgatanga Hospital project.

EDUCATION

Madam Speaker,

A number of critical factors continue to threaten progress in education delivery. Some of these are: gender disparities, geographical differentiations, poor teacher deployment, inadequate and poor school infrastructure, school drop-out, retention, and poor transition from primary to junior high school. We will address these concerns.

We will also strive in a more concerted manner to improve the situation of second-cycle education, especially conditions in many of our high schools. We will address management inefficiencies that affect equity and quality in the education system and take a critical look at the utilization practices of the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFUND).

One of the most significant challenges facing education is the recent reform that changed the duration of senior high school education. I am aware of the different opinions on this matter, and I am committed to providing a forum for a very dispassionate discussion on the matter. I hope this will bring the matter to a close and chart a more permanent structure that will serve the interest of learners, parents, and the country at large.

The School Feeding Program will be revived to benefit most directly the needy ones.

The teacher will remain at the centre of attention in the effort to improve the performance of this sector. The thirty-eight Teacher Training Colleges, which are now diploma-awarding institutions, will be strengthened to achieve standards required of them. The road map to integrate them fully into the tertiary system will be completed this year. As a government, we will ensure that all allowances promised to teachers are paid

to them. In addition, government will support the distance learning programmes for teachers.

Government will continue to support tertiary institutions to provide quality education that satisfy both graduates and employers. Government notes the ongoing expansion at this level of education and commends the efforts of the private tertiary institutions. The jobs of the future require skilled minds, and products of our tertiary institutions must reflect this. The National Accreditation Board must therefore insist on the highest standards of excellence.

ARTS AND CULTURE

We will focus on giving a new lease on life to choral and theater festivals and make them integral parts of the school curriculum. The School of Performing Arts and the National Commission on Culture will be encouraged to use the concept of “Theater for Development” to reinvigorate a sense of belonging that will help move the citizenry in the direction of building “A Better Ghana.”

ENERGY

Madam Speaker,
The Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) will also focus on, among other things, management for the Jubilee project to ensure that development costs are fair and reasonable. GNPC will enforce local content policy where Ghanaians will be able to participate significantly in oilfield support services.

Revenues from oil and gas will be used to address the challenges of poverty in Ghana through expenditures in the priority areas of education, health, rural development, infrastructure, water, and sanitation. We intend to establish a Future Generation Fund to ensure sustained well being into the long-term, and investment in technical training, scientific research, and development.

In addition to the Tano-Cape Three Points Basin, where recent discoveries have been made in deepwater areas, GNPC will also be encouraged to promote in other sedimentary basins

including the onshore Voltaian Basin, which covers a large part of Ghana’s surface area, but where very little exploration has been undertaken to date.

TEMA OIL REFINERY AND VRA

Madam Speaker,
Both Tema Oil Refinery (TOR) and Volta River Authority (VRA) are saddled with debts. The debt of TOR currently stands at GH¢1146 million or 11.46 trillion old cedis. The current debt profile at TOR compares with a total debt of GH¢318.6 million or 3.18 trillion old cedis as of December 31, 2000.

Government will review the utilization of the TOR Debt Recovery Fund.

Madam Speaker,
The debt of VRA exceeds \$800 million. Clearly, the current state of affairs is unsustainable, and concrete steps will be taken to address the situation.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Madam Speaker,
We intend to bridge the digital divide between the rural and urban communities. This will complement the promotion of the attainment of the goals and objectives of the four thematic areas of government.

We also aim to improve telephone subscription in both the fixed and mobile sectors to reach the rural and underserved areas. We will encourage development of common telecom facilities that will enable telecom operators to extend their services to many more communities.

We intend to accelerate a programme for a common, transparent Information Communication Technology (ICT) platform to enhance government business and promote transparency and accountability. Through the use of ICT, government will build a reliable database on all government assets, especially vehicles and landed properties.

SPECIAL SOCIAL INTERVENTIONS

Madam Speaker,

Under this administration, the Ministry of Women and Children will witness a significant budget increase, be strengthened to establish Gender Units in all District Assemblies, and provide them with capacity to function optimally.

We will revise, adapt, and implement our Affirmative Action Policy for Women of 1998, making sure that we have incorporated the key demands of the 2004 “Women’s Manifesto for Ghana,” as well as those of the political parties consistent with our women’s improvement agenda.

Madam Speaker,

By all measure of our national statistics, the three regions of the North—Northern, Upper East, and Upper West—and the Central Region show unacceptable levels of poverty and deprivation. Communities in these regions are increasingly exhibiting worsening trends of infant, child, and maternal mortality.

This administration will in 2009 establish the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority (SADA) as a more holistic development agency to harness the development of the three northern regions and districts in the Brong-Ahafo and Volta Regions contiguous to the northern region. Similarly, in the central region, we will revive CEDECOM to serve as a tool for poverty reduction and employment generation.

SPORTS

Madam Speaker,

Our goal is to move away from an over-concentration on soccer and, to some extent, boxing. We must unearth and harness potential in track and field by giving intercollegiate sports a new impetus.

We will restructure management set-up to maximize returns from the four new stadiums built for the Ghana 2008 Africa Cup of Nations and the new Cape Coast stadium under construction.

The Ghana Hockey Association will be assisted to successfully host the 2009 Africa Hockey Cup of Nations. Alongside the continental hockey championship, government, in partnership with the Ghana Football Association, will not only ensure a second appearance at the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa, but hopefully be one of the four nations that will play in the semi-finals and finals.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Madam Speaker,

We will remain fiercely Pan-Africanist and champion the course of African unity. Also, we will honour all our legitimate treaty obligations with the Commonwealth, the United Nations, and other international organizations.

CONCLUSION

Madam Speaker,

All throughout my political campaign, I pledged to make a difference in the politics of Ghana: to depart from the vilification, backbiting, political mischief-making, and divisiveness that have bedeviled politics in this country.

Indeed our message of change begins with the fundamental realization that there is a new way to look at our problems. We seek to use political power as an instrument to shape our future. I am determined to restore a sense of community in this country: a community in which we all share in the responsibility of shouldering the common good.

I want us to be kind and generous to each other. I believe it is possible to bring smiles back to the faces of all Ghanaians. Even if economic prosperity is slow in coming, Ghanaians will say of this government: We are truthful, honest, and sincere.

We will hold ourselves and all other public officials strictly accountable, and that principle is non-negotiable. I will be an example to the nation. I will be an example in being time-conscious. And, because it is hypocritical for those in political office to exhort people to sacrifice for

the common good when we are not prepared to do the same, I will lead by example.

I believe that all Ghanaians will join me to elevate Ghanaian politics beyond pettiness, and aim for something more sublime in the interest of Mother Ghana. To this end, I extend a hand of friendship to all to join us on the path of unity and peaceful coexistence, even though we may differ in our political beliefs.

Madam Speaker,

This House should serve as a model to Ghanaians who should see your teamwork as a prime example of peaceful and productive coexistence. Our nation is faced with economic difficulties and many challenges.

Can we build a unified country where all citizens have the opportunity to give of their best to Mother Ghana while earning a good education and a dignified standard of living? Can we all live under the Rule of Law, whereby we are all governed by the same set of laws and are equal before the law? Can we build a better and prosperous Ghana that works in the interest of all Ghanaians?

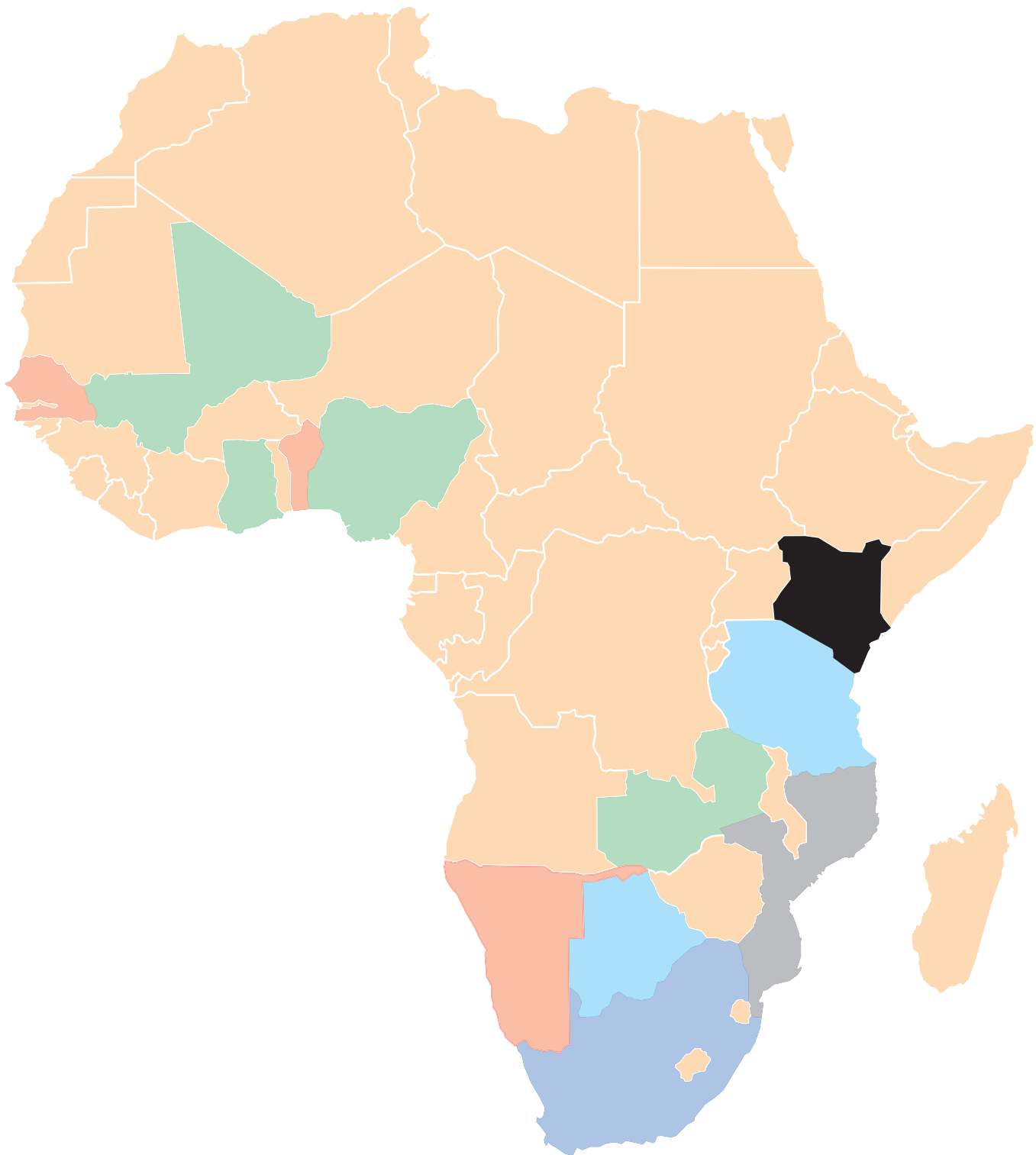
I believe that we can, and I thank you all for the opportunity to lead our nation in the process of finding and implementing durable answers to these questions. I invite my fellow citizens to join together in the process of regeneration of our country. We have to do it together. The past is gone. Let's build *A Better Ghana* together, underpinned by honesty and integrity.

Working together, we can lift Ghana to greatness of which we all can be proud. There is only one Ghana, and it must work for the betterment of all Ghanaians.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, I thank you for your attention.

May God continue to bless our homeland Ghana and make Her greater and stronger.

KENYA



KENYA



**Speech by His Excellency Mwai Kibaki,
President of the Republic of Kenya,
on the occasion of the Forty-Sixth
Madaraka Day Celebrations
Nyayo National Stadium
Nairobi, Kenya
June 1, 2009**



Fellow Kenyans,
I am very pleased to salute you on this auspicious occasion of our Forty-Sixth *Madaraka Day*. This is an important moment when we remember the day Kenyans gained the status of internal self-rule and management of the affairs of our country.

It is a day when we regained our dignity as a people, free from nearly a century of colonial rule. The vision of our founding fathers was to create a just, united, prosperous, and peaceful country, free of disease, ignorance, and poverty. On this occasion, we reflect on the progress we have made in attaining that vision.

Fellow Kenyans,

We mark *Madaraka Day* at a time when there is need to be more strategic in our decision making due to the nature of the challenges we face. Globally, the financial crisis has slowed down the performance of economies across the world. Indeed, the growth of the world economy has dropped from 3.7 percent in 2007 to 2.7 percent last year.

Here at home, several external and internal factors have slowed down our economic growth from 7.1 percent in 2007 to 1.7 percent last year. These included post-election violence, high energy and food prices, and adverse weather conditions. The consequence of this was reduced agricultural production and a slump in earnings from tourism.

It is expected that the financial crisis will continue to negatively affect our economy. This will occur through a reduced demand for commodities we produce, along with a reduction in investment capital flows, official development assistance, and Diaspora remittances.

As we all anticipated, the economic slowdown we are experiencing has negative implications on the living standards of our people, especially on our efforts toward poverty reduction and employment creation. In spite of these indications, however, the prospects for our economy are not as bleak. Indeed, some sectors of the economy, particularly the manufacturing, building, and construction sectors, have performed well.

Moreover, with sound macro-economic policies, as well as the reduction in the cost of fuel, agricultural inputs, and other interventions by my government, our economy is projected to grow between 2 and 3 percent this year. Though a modest growth rate, the projected improvement indicates the resilience of our economy in spite of enormous odds. Indeed, I am optimistic that we will soon have our economy back on the path of growth. But, we must show our individual and collective commitment to growth at the family, community, and national levels. It is, therefore, incumbent upon every Kenyan to embrace hard work, remain determined, and stay consistent.

Fellow Kenyans,

The key challenge we are facing, therefore, is the implementation of policies that will enable our economy to regain the growth momentum that we had achieved over the last few years. In this connection, my government is focusing on fast-tracking the implementation of the first phase of *Vision 2030*. In so doing, we will give priority to projects and programmes that are critical to the quick recovery of the economy.

Furthermore, we are making strategic interventions in all sectors to address the issues of employment creation, as well as elimination of absolute poverty. We will also continue to place emphasis on infrastructure development, as well as increasing investments in the social sectors. These interventions will widen economic opportunities for our people, especially the youth. In particular, my government is implementing systematic measures aimed at ensuring our youth are gainfully employed. In this regard, we launched the Kazi Kwa Vijana Programmes.

I am glad to note that most ministries have rolled out their Kazi Kwa Vijana Programmes

countrywide, and many of our young people have started benefiting from projects that are already underway. So far, the treasury has already disbursed 3.4 billion Shillings to various line ministries for this financial year. An additional 6.6 billion Shillings will be allocated in the coming financial year. We expect to generate 300,000 jobs from the programmes in the initial six months. The Office of the Prime Minister has already formed a committee to harmonize, monitor, and evaluate the efficiency of programmes. The committee will also coordinate and oversee efficient use of funds under the Kazi Kwa Vijana Programmes.

In addition to the Kazi Kwa Vijana, we have also taken steps to strengthen the Youth Enterprise Development Fund. I am glad to note that the fund has so far financed over 65,000 youth enterprises across the country to the tune of Ksh 2.3 billion and created 200,000 new jobs. The aim is to increase the core funding to Ksh 5 billion in government funds over the next three years.

I wish to applaud the private sector, especially the banks that have also leveraged the Youth Fund with an additional Ksh 2 billion. I thank them for showing confidence in the fund and wish to salute the Kenyan youth who have shown that they can run successful enterprises. We have the duty to inspire our youth to embrace hard work, patience, consistency, and a sense of purpose.

Besides the youth, we have also stepped up measures to provide financial support to women. Toward this end, we have launched the Women Enterprise Fund to serve as a source of subsidized credit for business start-up and expansion. I am glad to note that out of Ksh 1.2 billion currently set aside for the fund, a total of Ksh 682 million has been disbursed in loans to 92,000 women across the country. We will allocate another Ksh 500 million for the fund to bring the total available for women to Ksh 1.7 billion. I wish to make a special appeal to our youth and women to take advantage of the above efforts by my government and establish productive enterprises for their own benefit and the good of our nation.

In doing so, the youth and women will be well-advised to adopt improved technology and join in the manufacturing of consumer products for the domestic and regional markets. Let our youth and women enter the modern textile sector, for example, by making the numerous clothing products our people need for day-to-day use. I challenge you to come forward and engage in value addition of agro products and other goods that Kenyans and other people in the region use. The market is wide and unlimited. Take advantage now.

Fellow Kenyans,

Beyond these efforts, my government is implementing a number of multi-billion dollar infrastructure projects that will facilitate the creation of hundreds of thousands of jobs and stimulate numerous economic activities in all parts of our country. These projects include Special Economic Zones (starting with Athi River and Dongo Kundu in Mombasa), the Lamu Port and Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor, and the new Standard-Gauge Railway Line between Mombasa and Kampala.

Ground-breaking for most of these projects is expected to take place later this year and over the next two years. These new highways, railways, ports, power stations, oil and water pipelines, tourist resort cities, airports, as well as business and technology parks will altogether create thousands of jobs and give a big boost to our economic growth. Indeed, I am happy to note that in the next week, I will be officially launching the first undersea fibre-optic cable in Mombasa.

Fellow Kenyans,

Besides employment creation, there is urgent need for us to implement measures aimed at boosting agricultural production, particularly in the aspects related to food security in the country. As we are all aware, our country received less than adequate rains this season. To end our vulnerability due to weather changes with regard to food security, the government is implementing measures aimed at reducing our country's over-reliance on rain-fed agriculture.

In the coming financial year, and over the upcoming years, the government will invest heavily in rehabilitating existing large-scale irrigation schemes such as Kano, Ahero, Mwea, Hola and Bura, Perkerra, Wei Wei, and the Tana and Athi Rivers Development Authority (TARDA). We will also develop new schemes. These will include Kibwezi and Yatta irrigation schemes, the Lower Meru scheme, the Malindi and Tana Belt irrigation schemes, and Kimira Oluch in Rachounyo and Homa Bay, among others.

We have also begun the process of building a number of mega-dams in various parts of the country. These include Badasa Dam in Marsabit, Chemusu (multi-purpose) Dam in Baringo, Umma Dam in Kitui, Kiserian Dam, River Nzoia Dam, and Upper Ewaso Nyiro Dam. This will help us in the storage of water for irrigation and domestic consumption. The Ministries of Water and Irrigation, Agriculture, and Lands have been instructed to prepare a comprehensive irrigation development master plan to ensure our country is less dependent on rain-fed agriculture.

However, as an immediate measure, the government is determined to expand agricultural production by making fertilizer available to farmers at an affordable price. The government, together with related government agencies, has imported fertilizer worth Ksh 9.7 billion. This level of intervention by government is unprecedented and shows our commitment to empowering the Kenyan farmer.

In the meantime, and due to the anticipated reduction in crop production, there will be a need to have enough food stocks for emergency supplies for our people. Most of this food will have to be imported. I, therefore, direct the Ministry of Finance to extend the tax-free concessions for imported maize until the end of this year so that the private sector can continue to import affordable food.

For the most vulnerable individuals and communities facing famine, the government will continue to mobilize resources to provide emergency feeding programmes for households. We will also support the school-feeding programme in hardship areas. The government will continue work-

ing with local and international non-governmental organizations to ensure that sufficient quantities of food are supplied. We will also improve on the distribution system so that food supplies can be extended to every point of the country.

I, also, wish to thank all individual and corporate citizens who have come to the aid of those in need of food. Your help has been in the true spirit of a working and caring nation. The government will remain sensitive and caring about all Kenyans, especially the underprivileged. We can only move the country forward when we reach out to each other and open up opportunities for the majority of our people.

Fellow Kenyans,

Following the post-election events of early last year, concerns have been raised that we have not made progress fast enough in the implementation of reforms. However, I wish to assure Kenyans that since the signing and entrenchment of the National Accord in the Constitution and the establishment of the Grand Coalition Government, we have made significant strides in the past year. These include:

- establishment of the Kriegler Commission and the subsequent implementation of its recommendations;
- establishment of the Waki Commission last July and several attempts to establish a local tribunal, which will put an end to impunity. In this regard, consultations on various ways and options of implementing the report are still ongoing;
- the Electoral Commission of Kenya was dissolved, paving the way for electoral reforms, including the establishment of the Independent Interim Electoral Commission of Kenya and the establishment of the Interim Boundary Review Commission;
- legislation establishing the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission has been passed by Parliament;
- commissioners in the National Ethnic Cohesion and Integration Commission are set to begin work;

- establishment of the Police Reforms Task Force to drive the process of transforming our police force into a police service; and
- establishment of the Committee of Experts on the Constitutional Review to spearhead finalization of the review process.

These developments have paved the way for a wide range of political and socioeconomic reforms. What is often not understood is that policy and legal initiatives take time to implement. They have to be agreed upon by stakeholders, while others require to be legislated by Parliament or require a comprehensive review of the constitution.

By now, Kenyans have agreed that the most important reform we have to undertake as quickly as possible relates to the constitution review. Now that we have the Committee of Experts in place, it is essential to move ahead without further excuses.

The committee should now steer the review process in a non-partisan way and give Kenyans a draft that provides an appropriate new framework of the Kenyan State. We need a constitution that ensures national cohesion, participation, inclusion, and ownership. It would be best if the constitution adequately serves present and future generations and withstands the test of time.

I am, therefore, appealing to the political parties and all Kenyans to desist from taking rigid and partisan positions so that we can get a new constitution within the next few months.

Fellow Kenyans,

Another aspect of major reforms my government is undertaking concerns the judicial system. It has been said that justice delayed is justice denied. Therefore, there is urgent need to reduce the backlog of cases in our judicial system and deal with the issue of the thousands of Kenyans who are unnecessarily held in remand for long periods of time. An efficient judicial system is a key pillar in our efforts to enhance security and human dignity in our society.

To do this, funding for the judicial system—the Judiciary, State Law Office, Police Service,

and Prisons Department—will be substantially increased. Our objective is to have a sufficient number of judges and magistrates required to dispense with cases in a prompt and just manner. More importantly, we must have sufficient numbers of investigating officers stationed throughout the country. No doubt, other aspects of reform in the judicial system will be implemented once recommendations of the relevant task forces are received.

One of the problems the government has been trying to deal within the last six years is corruption. My government established the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission in an effort to deal with this social ill. There are hundreds of cases of corruption that are either in court or pending prosecution once investigations are complete. I urge the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission and the Attorney General, as well as the Judiciary, to move with speed and conclusively deal with these and other cases of corruption.

Fellow Kenyans,

A number of concerns have been raised over the state of the Grand Coalition. I wish to note that historically, coalitions face challenges, and the solutions are largely dependant on the amount of patience, trust, confidence, and focus on the common good. Our Grand Coalition is not different, though unique, in several respects. Therefore, occasional disagreements should not be construed to mean that the country or government is in a crisis.

I wish to assure Kenyans and our friends that the Prime Minister and I are determined to ensure that the Grand Coalition functions harmoniously. We are fully committed to faster and sustainable development, peace, unity, and stability. These are the major pillars upon which the Kenyan people seek to build their nation. They define our freedom and democracy, the very foundation on which modernization and transformation will take place. Let us guard them jealously.

Fellow Kenyans,

I am saddened by the continued loss of jobs we are experiencing, particularly with regard to

formal jobs in the private sector. While we understand the difficult economic times we face locally and internationally, I want to appeal to all employers to be more innovative in overcoming the difficult times. I am directing the Ministries of Labour and Finance to consult with the Federation of Kenya Employers and Central Organization of Trade Unions on this matter. There must be alternatives to laying off workers. We should be innovative and apply methods that will protect jobs.

The government will also be conducting a national census beginning on the night of August 24th this year. I call upon all Kenyans to fully participate in this exercise, which will provide critical information on the population for our development and planning purposes.

Turning to security in our country, I am concerned about the threats posed by organized criminal gangs, militias, commercial cattle rustling gangs, and vigilante forces. If we are to create a modern society, we must decisively deal with these groups. This is the reason why our security forces are under strict instructions to deal firmly and swiftly with those who threaten the lives and property of our people.

Fellow Kenyans,

The total effect of our development efforts will be rendered more effective when Kenya works within regional and international cooperation frameworks. Kenya will continue to work for full East African Integration. We shall also seek to strengthen free, close trade within the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the rest of Africa.

It is important at an occasion like this to point out that Kenya has the will and the capacity to protect her territorial integrity and the welfare of her people. However, we must not be a nation of warmongers, but a land of people who cherish peace as an end in itself. We seek to live in peace with all our neighbours. Nevertheless, we shall resist threats to our freedom and peace, and our security agencies have been instructed to deal firmly with threats from any quarters.

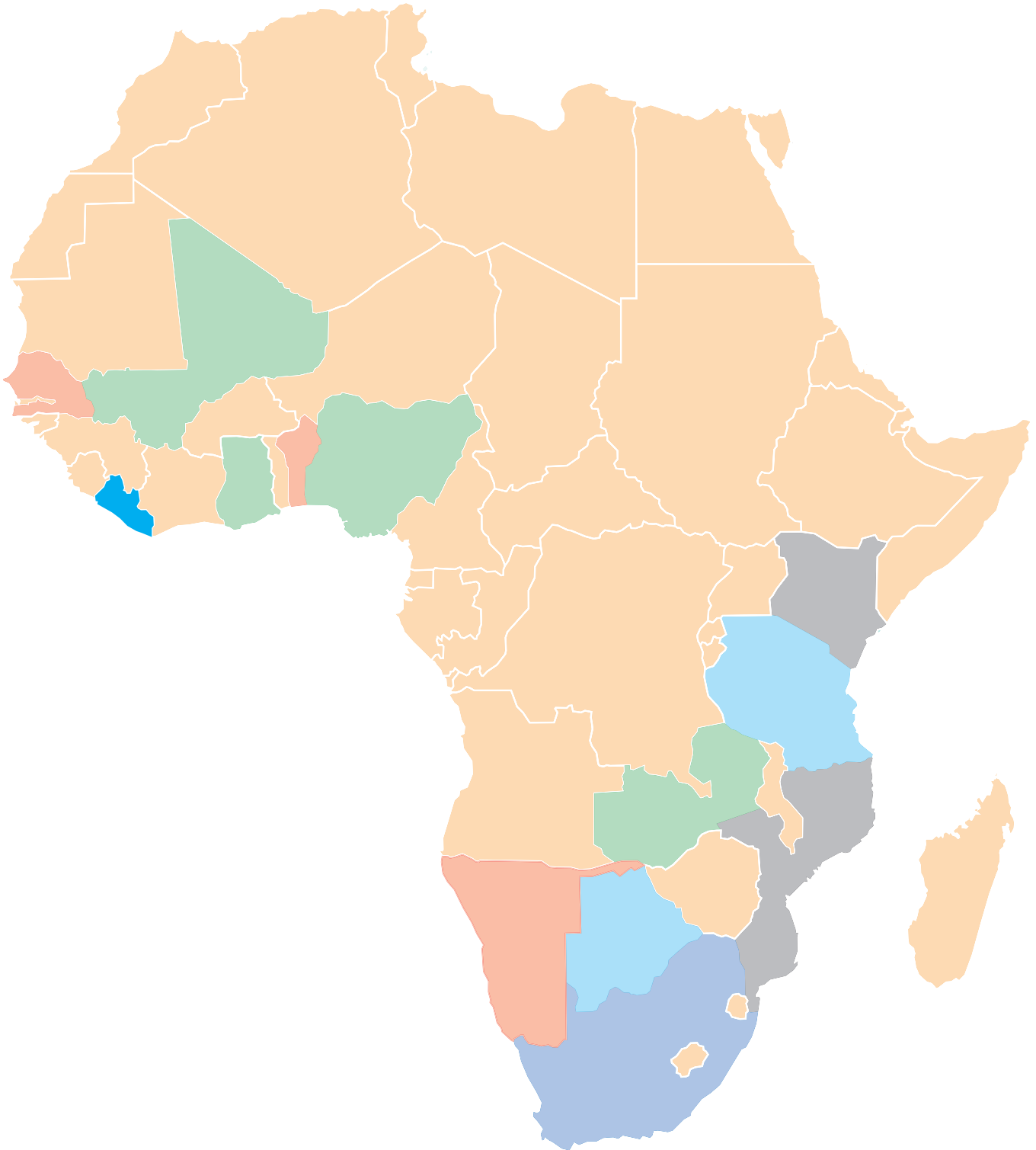
Finally, I want to assure you that while there are challenges that we face in our efforts to

develop our nationhood, we must never be distracted on our path to becoming a just, democratic, working, caring, and stable society. We must always have the will, focus, and discipline to make the hard decisions needed to move us forward as a united country.

On this day when we are reminded of how we assumed responsibility for our own affairs forty-six years ago, let us rededicate ourselves to assuming personal responsibility for national healing and reconciliation. This great and beautiful land of Kenya belongs to us all. It has room for all; it binds us together as one people and one nation. Let us all—men and women, young and old—join hands together and live as one people, one nation, and one Kenya.

ASANTENI NA MUNGU AWABARIKI

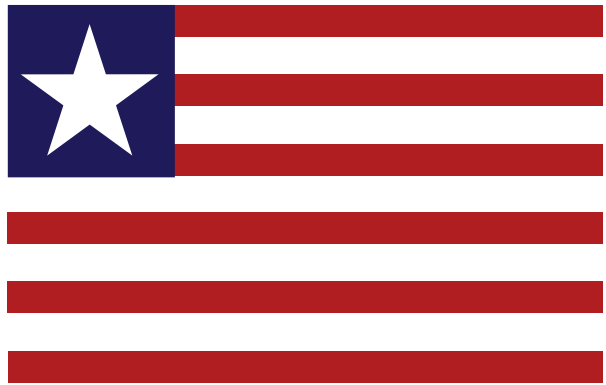
LIBERIA



LIBERIA



**Annual Message by Her Excellency
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of
the Republic of Liberia, to the
Fourth Session of the Fifty-Second
National Legislature
Monrovia, Liberia
January 26, 2009**



Mr. Vice President,
Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro Tempore;
Honorable Members of the Legislature;
Mr. Chief Justice,
Associate Justices of the Supreme Court,
Members of the Judiciary;
Members of the Cabinet and other
Government Officials;
Mr. Doyen,
Excellencies and Members of the
Diplomatic Corps;
Her Excellency the Special Representative
of the Secretary General of the United Nations
in Liberia;
Officers and Staff of the United Nations Mission
in Liberia;
The Command-Officer-In-Charge,
Men and Women of the Armed Forces of
Liberia (AFL);
Former Vice President and Mrs. Moses Blah;
Former Chairman of the National Transitional
Government Mr. Gyude Bryant;
Former Government Officials;
Traditional Leaders, Chiefs and Elders;
Political and Business Leaders;
Officers and Members of the National
Bar Association;
Labour and Trade Unions;
Youth and Student Organizations;
Civil Society Organizations;
Members of the Press;
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen; and
Fellow Liberians:

INTRODUCTION

Honorable Legislators,
In obedience to the Constitution of our Republic, I have the honour for the fourth time to report to you on the affairs of our nation. First, in homage to the Almighty God by whose Supreme Will we are guided, and to the memory of the cherished Liberian leaders and other citizens who have passed on to the great beyond, I ask that you join me in observing a moment of silence.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

During the year, you enacted into law several pieces of legislation, including the ratification of instruments significant to achieving our development goals, under the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). We commend you for the thirty-seven legislative instruments submitted by my office to this Honorable Body during its third session. Twenty-seven were enacted into law. Seven are still being deliberated upon in Committee Rooms, and three were returned to the Executive. We are pleased to recall that legislations submitted to this Honorable Body in 2007 were also enacted into law during the period under review.

Of the twenty-seven legislations enacted, seven acts were supportive of the Peace and Security Pillar. These include the revised National Defense Act, National Bureau of Veterans Act, and Chemical Weapons Act.

Eight legislations affected the Economic Revitalization Pillar including: the Act ratifying the Amended and Restated Concession Agreement between the Republic of Liberia and Firestone Liberia, Inc; the Act ratifying the Renegotiated Concession Agreement between the Government of Liberia (GOL) and LIBINC Oil Palm Company (LIBINCO); the Act ratifying the Renegotiated Concession Agreement between the Government of Liberia and the Liberia Forest Product, Inc. (LFP); and the Act ratifying the Concession.

Agreement between the Republic of Liberia and ADA Commercials, Inc. has been reached

along with the Act ratifying the Investment Agreement between the Republic of Liberia and Novel Liberia, Inc., and the ratification of various oil production sharing contracts.

Twenty legislations supported our work under Pillar III, Governance and Rule of Law including the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, the Act Amending Title 17 of the Revised Code of Laws of Liberia of 1972 to establish Criminal Court “E” of the First Judicial Circuit, Montserrado County, and the Act to Amend Section 2212 of the Revenue Code of Liberia Act of 2000 to Restrict Budgetary Transfers.

During the year under review, our administration issued six executive orders in the interest of the public to meet emergencies or to correct particular situations that could not await the lengthy legislative process to run its course:

- Executive Order #11, to suspend tariff on our main staple rice;
- Executive Order #12, to extend the mandate of the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation, and reintegration (NCD-DRR) to complete the rehabilitation and reintegration component of the NCDDRR Program within the context of national ownership;
- Executive Order #13, suspending tariff on road construction equipment, forestry equipment, agricultural equipment and agricultural seeds;
- Executive Order #14, to waive withholding taxes on salary income for and under \$70;
- Executive Order #15, to establish an ad-hoc independent commission to investigate alleged improprieties by certain officials of government in reference to email exchanges on the Front Page Africa website;
- Executive Order #16, placing a moratorium on the exportation of unprocessed natural rubber; and
- Executive Order #17, an extension of Executive Order #13.

Honorable Legislators,

I solicit your usual cooperation for the enactment of the seven draft legislations (2008) still pending before you, which have significant implications for the achievement of our goals of national renewal, provision of infrastructure and basic services, and the protection of our people. These include an act to amend certain provisions of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights Act of 2005, the three Boundary Harmonization Acts, an act to establish the National Airport Authority of Liberia, the Public Financial Management Act of 2008, and an act to establish the Land Commission.

Also pending before your Honorable Body, since 2007, are the act to authorize the establishment of the National Transit Authority, ratification of Universal Instrument Against Terrorism, an act to amend Title 2, Criminal Procedure Law, as enshrined in Volume 1 of the Liberian Code of Law Revised, and, of much importance, the Code of Conduct for Public Servants Act.

We also want to call this Honorable Body's attention to those acts that were returned to the Executive, and to assure you that when the Executive addresses your inquiries, these acts will be resubmitted for your consideration to enact them into laws. These include the act amending the Investment Incentive Act of 1973, the act amending Section 204(E) of the Liberia Revenue Code of 2000 and, the act to amend Chapter 15 of the penal law by adding thereto a new Sub-Section 15.54(7) known as the Asset Freeze Act.

Honorable Legislators,

As we move into the Fourth Session of the fifty-second legislature and the fourth year of this administration, we should all endeavor to keep the path to our development agenda steady but consistently enhancing. In this vein, we will be submitting for enactment by your Honorable Body, several proposed acts intended to consolidate the progress and tackle the challenges under the PRS. They include the Liberian National Security and Intelligence Act of 2008, an act amending the Public Procurement and Concessions Act (PPCA) of 2005 inter alia and

to harmonize the new Mining and Mineral Law and Petroleum Law with the PPCA, and an act to amend the act providing for retirement pension for high-level government officials.

Also to be submitted soon for your ratification is the Concession Agreement signed between the Government of Liberia and Buchanan Renewable (Monrovia) Power, Inc.

This is one of the major deliverables of the energy sector, under Pillar IV of Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy. The agreement is also in line with our National Energy Sector White Paper and the draft National Energy Policy, whereby the private sector will be encouraged to participate in power generation as Independent Power Producers (IPPs). In turn, the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC) or a successor company, by itself, or in joint venture with private entities, will handle transmission and distribution.

Key highlights of the Agreement are as follow:

- two power plants, 17.5 MW each (total 35 MW), fired from wood of old rubber trees, will be built in the vicinity of Kakata, Margibi County;
- about 30 MW (net) of power and 223 million kWh/yr of electrical energy will be delivered from these plants in Kakata to the LEC substation in Paynesville for distribution to all parts of Monrovia and its environs. Power from these plants will also be distributed to Kakata and its surroundings and to other parts of Montserrado County;
- the first power from these plants will be available by the end of 2010; and
- the estimated capital cost of the project is \$149 million.

The project offers the following benefits and has several advantages:

- the fuel source, rubber wood, is a renewable resource and relatively clean, unlike fossil fuel, which is non-renewable and has adverse environmental consequences;
- spent rubber wood is plentiful in Liberia unlike fossil fuel, which has to be imported,

thus causing strain on Liberia's Foreign Currency Base. Liberian rubber farmers will earn an income from the sale of spent rubber wood to Buchanan Renewable;

- hundreds of construction jobs and more than one hundred full-time, long term jobs associated with the power production and distribution will be created;
- there will be construction of new roads to gain access to some of the rubber wood farms; and
- Liberia will be an example in Africa where rubber wood is being used to produce industrial power.

The Mineral Development Agreement (MDA) between China Union Mining Co. (Hong Kong), Ltd. and China Union Investment (Liberia) Bong Mines Co., Ltd., and the Government of Liberia is the largest single investment package in the history of Liberia and is intended to resume iron ore mining and processing operations at Bong Mines. It will facilitate the investment of \$2.68 billion to rehabilitate infrastructure and operational facilities at Bong Mines, the port, the railroad, and the Kakata-Heindi Highway, and to start up iron ore production and processing operations at Bong Mines.

Key benefits to Liberia include the following:

- an estimated 3,000 new jobs will be created;
- transmission and distribution infrastructure will be constructed to provide surplus electricity to major communities;
- the railroad from Monrovia to Bong will be rehabilitated and reconstructed to carry not only iron ore, but also regular public passengers and cargos; and
- an annual contribution of \$3.5 million will be provided for community development to the Bong, Margibi, and Montserrado Counties.

Many other community development investments will be made directly by the concessionaire, including:

- the establishment of an Agricultural Demonstration Project that will train (by demonstration) local farmers in the establishment and management of productive farming;
- the rehabilitation and/or construction of a hospital, clinics, and health posts, in the concession area, as well as in surrounding communities;
- the rehabilitation and/or construction of a high school, a technical school, and elementary schools in the concession area, as well as in surrounding communities;
- scholarships and research funds will also be available; and
- the rehabilitation and/or establishment of several recreation and service facilities.

Three forest management contracts between government and the Liberia Tree and Trading Company, EJ&J Investment Corporation, and Alpha Logging & Wood Processing, Inc., are also being put forth for your review. Commercial forestry operations are indicated in the Poverty Reduction Strategy as the spearhead of the economic revitalization of Liberia outside the capital city. It is slated to deliver jobs, regenerate local communities, improve infrastructure, and provide much needed revenue for development to government— the major part of which will be earmarked for spending on activities identified in county development agendas and in communities directly affected by logging.

Given the urgent and desperate needs of our people, the Forest Development Authority (FDA) has devoted much of its initial energies to addressing this challenge. It has been guided by these important principles to:

- expedite logging to provide jobs for young men and women outside the cities;
- ensure that communities receive their just and equitable benefits from logging through the provisions of the 2006 Forest Reform Law and maximize the value of those benefits through transparent, competitive bidding;

- protect the forest resources from over-logging and destruction from unbridled private greed; and
- provide a regulatory framework based on principles and criteria of sustainable forest management.

After two years of careful planning and assistance from the United States Government and other development partners to lay the foundations for sustainable development, these contracts have been awarded through competitive international bidding to Liberian and overseas investors for 580,000 acres in the middle and northwest of Liberia.

In order to ensure an equitable regional balance in national development, FDA is moving quickly ahead to attract further investment of 1.9 million acres in the forested southeast of Liberia, which will be the mainstay of economic development in those counties for many years to come. Without forestry, these rural areas of our country would wait many years for any tangible benefits from large-scale developments in either agriculture or mining.

VISION

Mr. President of the Senate, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Legislators,

Our vision is clear and detailed in our Poverty Reduction Strategy. Liberians want to build a new nation that is peaceful, secure, and prosperous: a nation with democratic and accountable governance based on the rule of law and with abundant employment and other economic opportunities. Our critical objective over the next three years is to be on an irreversible path toward this goal: to achieve rapid, inclusive, and sustainable growth and development; to build the capabilities of and provide new opportunities for Liberia's greatest asset, its people; and to establish responsible institutions of justice, human rights, and governance. This is our vision and our commitment, which can only be achieved when the majority of our people share in the vision and are willing to participate positively and constructively in the processes of reform and change.

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Honorable Legislators,

Let me now report on the state of the nation, the progress that we have made and the challenges that we face under the four pillars of our development agenda.

PEACE AND SECURITY

Let us all be thankful to God and to the Liberian people as we enter our sixth year of peace. This has been made possible by the continued support that we receive from the United Nations Security Council in providing the United Nations Mission, which includes a Peace Keeping Force with a current strength of 12,065. An agreed gradual draw-down plan is expected to see a meaningful size force in the country through the 2011 elections.

Under the security sector reform, our target for the new Armed Forces of Liberia has been met with the current strength of 2,057 personnel. This includes 773 formed into military police units, an engineering company, garrison departments, and a brigade training unit. Expanded and improved facilities at the Edward Binyah Kesselly Barrack in Schefflin, the Sandee Ware Barracks in Careysburg, and the newly renovated Tubman Barracks in Gbarnga will accommodate our troops. Under the Defense Act, we have commenced the reestablishment of our Coast Guard with forty persons in initial sailor training to commence initial operations when facilities at the port are rehabilitated and vessels and other equipment are ready by the end of the year.

The Liberia National Police (LNP) had attained and surpassed its initial goal set by the United Nations of training a new core of 3,500 personnel. Using that figure in comparison with the population of over 3.5 million, it means that on the average one police officer services 1,000 citizens. There is, therefore, a need for infusion of more officers in the new year, a process that has already begun.

The LNP, in its continued drive to upgrade its effectiveness and responsiveness to crimes in the community, graduated the first 139 approved of 500 for the contingent Emergency Response

Unit (ERU) of the LNP. The Unit is now fully operational, assisting the Police Support Unit (PSU) and the regular police units combat crime in the nation. It is anticipated that the full strength of the ERU will be attained during the course of 2009.

The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) reports that during the year a total of 235,495 legal aliens were admitted into the country, 101 aliens were refused admission, and 191,098 departed the country. It also records that a total of forty-four Liberians were deported from the United States of America and several hundred Liberians repatriated from Ghana.

The incidence of drug trafficking in our sub-region is of increasing concern. During the year our Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) arrested 267 persons, including 244 Liberians, for drug offences. The Agency continues to be active in the destruction of marijuana plants that are grown in certain parts of the country. A continuing problem still to be effectively addressed, the Liberia National Fire Service recorded 147 fires during the year that resulted in eleven casualties, thirty-two injuries, and damages totaling about \$1.2 million.

With a few exceptional lapses, the Special Security Service (SSS) improved its performance with training and instructional support from the U.S. Advisory Team.

We continue to face challenges in all of our security units in terms of integrity and attitudes that are reminiscent of the past. However, government must take responsibility in encouraging better performance by doing more to improve their living and working conditions. This is particularly true for those who are to serve in rural areas. We must also find more effective means to deal with the menace of armed robbery. I ask for your support in providing the budgetary resources that will enable us to do so, and I will engage the Judiciary Branch in an effort to obtain quick and effective action against those criminals who continue to harm and steal from hard working innocent citizens.

The National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Resettlement and Reintegration

(NCDDRR) is nearing completion of training of the residual caseload of 7,388 disarmed and demobilized ex-combatants and will wind down its activities by midyear. There is need for assistance to the Commission to retire honorably the fifty-three ex-generals of the AFL and warring factions that have assisted in bringing this program to successful conclusion.

The Liberia Refugee, Repatriation, and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC), as the refugee agency of government, completed the process that resulted in 326,990 of the 400,000 displaced persons returned to their communities. Those commissions also worked with the concerned ministries in government to address the problems of refugees in the Budumburan camp in Ghana. As a result, some 10,000 of a total refugee population of approximately 26,000 have returned home, several of whom are benefiting from programs of capacity building and skills training, employment, and a moderate microcredit loan scheme.

ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION:

Mr. Speaker and Honorable Members of the National Legislature:

The government's strategy for accelerating economic growth has three prongs: rebuilding basic infrastructure, restoring production in the natural resource sectors while ensuring that the benefits are widely shared, and reducing production costs to lay the foundation for diversification of the economy.

During the past three years, we took major strides towards rebuilding and reintegrating our economy into the world economy. But to fully appreciate the extent of progress, it is better to put things in perspective and remind ourselves where things were at the end of 2005. Owing to poor governance, the UN ban on exports of diamonds and timber products was still in place. Exports valued \$131 million. The government budget was a paltry \$80 million. Civil servants salaries were as low as \$15 per month. Our roads, not built or maintained for many years, had countless potholes and some were virtually

impassable; this resulted into extremely high repair and maintenance costs on vehicles.

Large foreign and domestic arrears were accumulating while large revenue leakages persisted. The Central Bank's international reserves stood at just a little over \$5 million. Reflecting the underlying concerns about the management of the economy, net outflows of remittances were \$133 million, foreign direct investments were virtually non-existent, and Liberia's massive external debt had accumulated to over \$4 billion (equivalent to \$1,500 for each Liberian citizen). Things could not have been more dire.

Three years on, things have changed. Economic growth increased from 5.3 percent in 2005 to 9.5 percent in 2007, with an expected decline to 7.1 percent in 2008 on account of lags in investment starts. The ban on diamond and timber exports has been removed. The Kimberly Certification Process has been adopted. New forestry law and regulations have been established, and timber exports are expected to restart in the next few weeks. The level of exports rose to \$260 million in 2008. The government's budget has increased to nearly \$300 million. The lowest monthly civil servants salaries is now \$70 and civil servants' salaries are paid sometimes two weeks before the end of the month. The government's external and domestic debts are being addressed, and the Central Bank of Liberia's (CBL) international reserves now stand at approximately \$50 million. Additionally, the capital and liquidity positions of banks operating in Liberia have significantly improved, and the exchange rate has been broadly stable, thereby containing inflation. Reflecting confidence in the management of the economy in 2008, net inflows of remittances were \$42 million and new foreign direct investments were estimated at \$200 million.

Mr. Speaker, Honorable Legislators,

Immediately upon our ascendancy, we took swift and decisive action to launch an initial *150-Day Action Plan* that addressed the immediate development challenges. During the period under review, we completed our first comprehensive Poverty Reduction Strategy after unprece-

ented national consultations across the fifteen political subdivisions.

From the outset, the administration embraced the international community in an open partnership in Liberia's reconstruction, development, and in the improvement of economic management under the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program (GEMAP). With strong leadership and commitment by the government, rapid progress was made under the IMF Staff Monitored Program (SMP) in improving the revenue base, strengthening cash management and commitment controls, strengthening the management of the Central Bank's finances and the fragile banking system, and putting in place a strategy to address corruption and Liberia's large external and domestic debts.

Our commitment to sound economic management has been well-received by the international community. In April of last year, the IMF Board approved a three-year program supported by a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) to help maintain macroeconomic stability and achieve the growth objectives under the PRS.

In December 2008, the Executive Branch of the IMF completed the first review of Liberia's economic performance under the three year PRGF arrangement. Following the Board's discussion, the Acting Chair summarized their discussion as thus:

"The Liberian authorities have implemented prudent fiscal and monetary policies and structural reforms under their IMF-assisted program to support postwar reconstruction and economic recovery. Important measures have been taken to strengthen public financial management and fight corruption. Sound policies have contributed to strong economic growth, rising foreign direct investment, a build-up of net international reserves, and broad exchange rate stability. Economic prospects remain favorable. Nevertheless, the current global slowdown could negatively affect foreign direct investment, exports, and remittance flows. The author-

ities responded appropriately to the challenges posed by higher fuel and food prices in 2008. Their comprehensive food security strategy focuses on raising domestic food production and securing donor resources to finance social safety net programs. Continued donor support will be essential to ensure the success of the strategy, in view of the limited availability of public resources.”

With their completion of the review, SDR 7 million (or \$10 million) was made available to strengthen our Central Bank reserves.

Mr. Speaker,

When we assumed office, we inherited massive external debt amounting to \$4.7 billion. This included \$1.6 billion in multilateral debt, \$1.5 billion in bilateral debt, and \$1.6 billion in commercial loans and supplier credit. This represented a burden far too large for the Liberian people to pay. As I reported last year, we began to rationalize our debt when in December 2007 long overdue amounts to the World Bank and African Development Bank were cleared through grant operations, effectively reducing our debt by \$670 million.

In March 2008, Liberia’s arrears of some \$900 million to the IMF were cleared through new financing arrangements with IMF members. I am thus pleased to report that for the first time in more than two decades, Liberia’s membership rights have been fully restored and returned to good standing with the African Development Bank, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

Honorable Legislators,

We then moved to tackle the bilateral debt. In March 2008, we reached the so-called “Decision Point” of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, an important milestone in the formal debt relief process. At the “Decision Point,” the international community committed itself to writing-off Liberia’s external debt in line with the HIPC terms. In April 2008, Liberia met

with the Paris Club, the group of official bilateral creditors, for the first time in over twenty-five years. We successfully negotiated the most generous terms ever afforded by the Paris Club to a HIPC country at the Decision Point.

The agreement provided immediate forgiveness of over \$250 million in debt. The remainder was rescheduled in such a way that Liberia effectively will not be required to make debt service payments for the foreseeable future and paves the way for ultimate 100 percent forgiveness of our bilateral debts. Several Paris Club creditors have agreed to provide immediate 100 percent debt forgiveness, with full cancellation agreements already signed with the United States (\$425 million), Germany (\$410 million), and Denmark (\$29 million).

In 2008, we signed an agreement with the French Government involving the immediate cancellation of approximately \$1.8 million and the rescheduling of approximately \$152 million. This morning, the Minister of Finance and the Norwegian Ambassador signed an agreement involving cancellation of approximately \$32.8 million of our debt obligation to Norway and the rescheduling of the \$3.5 million balance along HIPC terms. We are in the process of concluding agreements with other Paris Club members for the cancellation and/or rescheduling of the remainder of our bilateral debt.

With respect to commercial debt, the government has met with its commercial creditors three times, and negotiations are proceeding favorably. We are cautiously optimistic that, during the course of this year, we will reach final agreements with these private sector creditors that will result in a substantial write-down in this segment of our debt.

All told, to date the government’s negotiations so far have resulted in immediate debt reductions of nearly \$1.5 billion. The remaining debt is expected to be forgiven when we reach the final stage of the HIPC Process—the “Completion Point”—hopefully by the end of 2009 or early 2010. However, I should point out that reaching the HIPC Completion Point is dependent on when we achieve all of the Completion Point

triggers. These include completion of important reforms that provide assurances of our commitment to sound economic policies that can help the poor, improve governance, and lay the platform for strong growth.

More importantly, we must have enacted and implemented a Public Financial Management Law and its accompanying regulations for at least a year. We must have completed successive audits of key government ministries and agencies, begun the implementation of a revised Investment Incentive Code, enhanced our debt management capacity, and ensured the smooth operation of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission.

So Mr. Speaker and Honorable Members of the Legislature,

The challenge is indeed enormous, but I am confident that with your support we can reach the HIPC Completion Point no later than early 2010. This is very important for it is only at that time we can get the fiscal space to access normal sources of financing that would begin to address our development challenges more meaningfully.

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

There has been significant improvement in fiscal management in the past year. As a result domestic revenues grew from \$176.18 million in 2007 to \$211.12 million in 2008, a growth of 19.8 percent. Adding the revenue collected in 2008 to the beginning cash balance of approximately \$38.28 million, the total amount available to spend in 2008 was \$249.38 million.

The main drivers of revenue growth in 2008 were increased collections of customs revenues on account of the rise in imports and increased collections from the mining sector.

On the expenditure side, we have continued the policy of a cash-based budget while ensuring the payment of civil servant salaries on time and tackling the large stock of domestic arrears that we inherited. Expenditures for the period under review totaled \$230 million compared with expenditures of \$166.92 million in the previous year, a jump of over 38 percent. This significant increase in expenditures in 2008 is explained not

only by the increase in the amount available to spend in the budget but also by small measures of strengthening capacity in procurement and efficiency enhancement in budget execution across government institutions. These gains notwithstanding, we must concede that we are still dogged with serious capacity constraints in government institutions in regards to understanding of the new public procurement process and bureaucratic hiccups in budget execution.

Honorable Legislators,

In December 2008, we began to pay the salaries of employees of thirteen government ministries and agencies through direct deposits at commercial banks and will add eleven more ministries to the direct deposit program in February 2009. The goal is to ensure that before the end of April 2009, not less than 90 percent of civil servants are paid through direct deposit. Another significant step in the direct deposit program will begin in February 2009 when the Ministry of Finance will stop paying vendors through checks but rather through direct deposits to their accounts at commercial banks. These measures are intended to deal with inefficiencies and integrity of our entire payment system. On the revenue side, processes are now underway to improve the custom clearing process, the management of duty free privileges, and plug leakages at revenue collectorates across the country.

Honorable Legislators,

In 2008, maritime revenue to government totaled \$14.6 million compared with \$13.5 million in 2007. This performance reflects an increase of 10 percent in vessel registration, including 513 new vessels, from 2,665 at 82 million gross tons to 2,926 at 86 million gross tons. Let me say a few additional words regarding our Maritime Program. We have appointed a group of capable and highly motivated individuals as new managers. They have already moved the program a long way to more national partnership and control around a broader range of maritime services consistent with the path other registries have followed. They have been given the authority

to explore all options for the future management of the program, being only concerned with that which avoids any possible conflict of interest and that which maximizes national interest and benefits.

There are still challenges to be met in our fiscal system. Systems development through automation is nearing completion, thereby enhancing accountability and transparency in the budget process. The restructuring and reorganizing of the Ministry of Finance now under way will result in better staffing and stronger capacity. In the longer term, decentralization of some of the operational functions of the Ministry will provide a wider policy and regulatory role for the Ministry of Finance.

Honorable Legislators,

We remain ever grateful to former Finance Minister Dr. Antoinette Sayeh for the competence and quality of leadership she brought to our debt relief effort. With our concurrence, the IMF has recognized her capacity and performance by elevating her to the position of Director of the African Department of the IMF where she will continue to serve Liberia within the scope of her African directorship.

Under the guidance of a strongly motivated and reorganized Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, Liberia qualified in December for threshold status under the program of the United States Millennium Challenge Corporation. This gave further testimony to the country's strong governance gains as recognized by the World Bank Institute, which ranked Liberia as having made the best progress in fighting corruption. This was echoed by the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance, which last year rated Liberia as the most improved country on the continent in terms of governance. Our challenge is to sustain this progress.

Additionally, the Ministry of Planning has developed a three-year Strategic Plan that addresses the enhancement of its own internal capacity as a core strategy for reinvigorating the Ministry as a key agency in the economic planning and implementation of the PRS. To this

end, the Ministry has established one of the first computerized learning resource centers and is formulating a set of curricula for training, in collaboration with the Civil Service Agency (CSA). In addition, the Ministry has volunteered to be the first to implement the Civil Service Reform Strategy, which was recently approved by the Cabinet and launched by the CSA.

Honorable Legislators,

The net foreign reserves position of the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) increased by \$14.3 million in 2008, bringing the total level of reserves to \$49.4 million. This is significant considering that about three years ago, the reserves were about \$5 million. The continued increase in the Bank's foreign reserves position enhances its ability to intervene in the foreign exchange market to support stability of the exchange rate and boost the nation's macroeconomic environment.

In 2008, the CBL increased the minimum capital requirement of all commercial banks operating in Liberia from \$2 million to \$6 million. It is expected to be further increased to \$8 million at the end of December 2009 and to \$10 million by December 2010. This is intended to make the Liberian banking sector internationally competitive, create the incentive for banks to properly and adequately manage their risks, and put the banking sector in a stronger position to help meet the financing needs of the economy.

The total capital of commercial banks increased from \$21 million in 2006 to \$40.5 million by the end of December 2008, largely on account of the injection of new capital. Additionally, the CBL has made significant progress at promoting a banking culture and access to financial services throughout the nation. Currently, there are twenty-eight bank branches in many major population centers throughout a number of counties including Montserrado, Nimba, Margibi, Bong, Grand Cape Mount, and Grand Bass. Permission has been granted for bank branches in Maryland. Also, the banking sector has benefited from a number of innovations geared towards improving the payments system. These include the introduction of

Automatic Teller Machines (ATM), Short Message Service (SMS), and internet banking.

During the year, the number of operational banks increased to six with the opening of the United Bank for Africa Liberia (UBAL). The CBL granted provisional licenses to three international banks:

- Guaranty Trust, which will be capitalized at \$10 million;
- Access Bank Liberia Limited – The Microfinance Bank, which will have an initial capital of \$6 million; and
- Oceanic Bank, which will be capitalized at \$8 million.

This will bring the number of banks operating in Liberia during the course of 2009 to nine.

Through prudent monetary policy management and the conduct of the CBL weekly foreign exchange auction, the readily available monetary policy instrument to the Bank, the Liberian dollar to US dollar exchange rate remained broadly stable during the course of the year. In our society, where most of the people live below the poverty line, this is very important as it provides some protection to the purchasing power of the domestic currency.

Inflation declined from a peak of 26.5 percent in August to 9.4 percent at the end of December 2008, much lower than inflation rates in many countries in the region. This is an indication of a progressive downward movement in the general price level in the economy.

The high volume of non-performing loans in the sector remains a concern largely due to the poor credit culture of individuals and inability of the court system to enforce commercial contracts. A fast-track court to deal with financial and commercial contracts will help improve the climate for lending.

Notwithstanding the numerous strides made by the Central Bank, the year was not without its fair share of challenges. Thanks to the vigilance of an employee and internal controls at the Bank, a scam involving the recycling of some government checks was uncovered. This was a matter of collusion, which in most cases will defeat internal

control measures put in place. This unscrupulous conduct provides ample evidence that “the lack of integrity” is a cancer that pervades all segments of our society. Although this scandal is suspected to involve a collusion of participants across multiple governmental ministries and agencies, every CBL employee suspected of involvement was immediately suspended and turned over to the appropriate authorities for further investigation and prosecution where necessary. Additionally, the CBL is restructuring its banking department and has hired a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) as its internal auditor.

Mr. Speaker, Honorable Legislators,

There is no doubt that growth in agriculture is more effective in reducing poverty than effort in any other sector. In the agriculture sector, we sought to expand domestic food production with emphasis on rice so as to reduce the substantial import bill for this strategic commodity. Although this was not government funding, it is important to note that rice imports cost our economy over \$200 million last year. In response we have signed and you have ratified two concession agreements for aggregate investment of \$32.5 million for rice production in Lofa and Grand Cape Mount Counties. A continuation of support to small farmers by providing seeds, tools, and processing machines will add impetus to this effort. The reactivation of agriculture research at the Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI) has proven instrumental in this regard.

Revitalization of our traditional rubber industry is critical to the long term growth potential of our agriculture export sector. During the year, we experienced a sharp fall in production due to low yields from old and damaged trees and a decline in demand on account of the global financial crisis. An aggressive ongoing replanting program by Liberian farmers and by the large existing plantations—Firestone, Liberia Agriculture Company (LAC), Morris American Rubber (MARCO)—is expected to boost production in the medium-term. Overall concession production of rubber and oil palm should experience significant expansion once negotiations have concluded:

- Sime Darby of Malaysia for reactivation and expansion of the Guthrie Plantation;
- Salala Rubber Investment Ltd. from the United Kingdom;
- Internationale De Plantation D'Heveast (SIPH) of France for the Cavalla Plantation in Maryland County; and
- Sithe Global of the United States.

Ongoing efforts to attract investment for reactivation of the Decoris Oil Palm Plantation in Maryland County and the Cocopa Rubber Plantation in Nimba County should bring similar results.

Honorable Legislators,

The forestry sector represents one of Liberia's greatest assets. Our total forestry land area of 9.58 million hectares represents one of the thirty-six hot spots in the world with diverse plant and animal species and 240 timber species. The sector has been slow in meeting its performance and revenue targets due to the difficulties experienced in meeting the requirements of the new Forestry Law. Six timber sales contracts for Liberian timber operators have commenced in Grand Bassa, Gbarpolu, and Grand Cape Mount County. Two large-sized revised forestry management contracts for operations in Rivercess have been signed and submitted for ratification, while a third in Lofa and Gbarpolu is being processed for submission. All forest operations may suffer additional delays as we seek a solution to the conflict that exists between the Forestry Law and the Forest Community Rights Law. This may please local and external conservationists but will harm the employment and social benefits that would accrue to our communities. Thus, effort is required to strike a right balance in our goals of commercialization, conservation, and community benefits.

Honorable Legislators,

We are pleased to report good progress in the reactivation of our mining sector. Although affected by the current global crisis, the Yekepa Mines reactivation is on course with Arcelor Mittal, which has reaffirmed its commitment to the activities detailed in its concession agreement but with a possible slow down that would result

in the first export in 2010 rather than 2009. On the other hand, we expect full speed ahead with China Union under the recently signed concession agreement for \$2.6 billion, the largest size investment in our country's history, once you have ratified the concession agreement.

Moreover, when ongoing processes and negotiations are concluded, we look forward to operations by the America Liberia Company in the gold fields of Cocoya in Bong County, Karweakan in Grand Gedeh County, Klekle in Montserrado County, and Cestos gold fields in Rivercess County. We look forward to operations by BHP Billiton in the Kitoma iron ore mines in Grand Bassa and Nimba Counties and similar operations by Mano River Resources in the Putu iron ore range in Grand Gedeh County. When one of the six companies that are involved in the rebidding process is chosen before the middle of this year, we expect the startup of operations in the Western Cluster iron ore mines of Bomi and Gbarpolu counties.

We are pleased to report significant progress in our oil exploration program. Three dimensional seismic surveys, which are more detailed, have been started by the five companies that obtained ratified Production Sharing Contracts. A second bid round for three blocks were concluded during the year under review. Anadarko of the United States and Hong Kong Tong-Tai Petroleum Corporation of Hong Kong were successful in this bid. Production Sharing Contracts for this next phase of exploration will be forwarded for your review and ratification when negotiations are concluded.

Several other investments are underway or under consideration in the service sector – construction, housing, and hotels. Notably among these is the Robert L. Johnson and OPIC's \$30 million to support Liberian businesses and the soon to be launched construction of two new housing estates— a 1,200 unit on the Robertsfield Highway by Broad Cove/OPIC of the United States and a 10,000 unit by Haiman Century Investment of China. We are aware that there is need to rehabilitate or complete several public buildings in Monrovia and in other counties. There is also urgency in restoring the nation's

seat of government—the Executive Mansion. Effort is underway to mobilize the significant resources required to achieve these objectives.

The National Investment Commission (NIC) also reports that during last year, a total of eighteen investment contracts were signed for an aggregate value of \$132.5 million and creation of 2,287 jobs. In the area of commerce, total trade continues to expand with exports at a value of \$181.05 million and imports \$856.81 million. This trend is matched by the increase in the number of businesses registered—7,569 in 2008 compared with 6,764 in 2007. Yet, we have not seen the expected growth in Liberian businesses, nor have we been able to take advantage of our eligibility for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). Moreover, we continue to be concerned about the continued high prices of commodities on the market, relating not only to world market prices but to high taxes, profiteering, theft, and inefficiency at the port of Monrovia. The Ministry of Commerce, which has taken bold steps recently to address these issues, gives assurance that we can expect progress in responding to these concerns in this year.

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

As a part of our economic reform agenda, appropriate steps are being taken to develop a comprehensive corporate governance framework with the goal of improving the efficiency and increasing the productivity of state owned enterprises and public parastatals.

We want to recognize improvements made by some Public Corporations/State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) attributable in part to technical assistance under the Government and Economic Assistance Management Program (GEMAP). Notwithstanding, current experiences show that some SOEs are not efficiently utilizing their assets to maximize their productivity. Poor financial and economic performance, as well as inadequate board oversight, has rendered these SOEs liabilities to government. We therefore acted with immediacy to remove all non-statutory members from the boards of public corporations for lack of proper supervision. And we instructed all boards to constitute audit

committees that will work closely with internal auditors to ensure the protection of corporate assets. A reconstitution of the boards will be undertaken within the next two weeks.

We are presently assessing the current practice in relation to good corporate governance and developing strategic actions to reverse this trend. As part of an overarching corporate governance reform strategic action, we will institute a wide range of actions in the current year that include:

- We will ensure the active existence of an entity that will exercise the public ownership rights of SOEs. It will be strengthened and adequately resourced with a clear mandate to monitor the functioning of boards, ensure adherence to a comprehensive corporate governance policy, and report to the full cabinet. This will enable the government to act as an informed, accountable, and active owner of SOEs.
- We will conclude empirical studies, using objective criteria to determine which SOEs to be fully divested; establish Public-Private-Partnership, Build Operate and Transfer, or adopt other forms of organizational reconfiguration.
- We will develop a firm government policy on board nomination processes and ensure that boards carry out their fiduciary responsibilities subject to established guidelines within the corporate legal framework.
- We will require that all senior staff of SOEs are recruited through a competitive process and work based on term contracts, reviewable periodically.
- Given the significant and unregulated differentials in compensation of board and senior management at state owned enterprises, a compensation package will be developed to standardize all public corporations, with the objective to attract, retain, and motivate excellent people, reward performance in both the short and long-term with a decided emphasis on long-term returns, and will be fair to the public shareholders, senior management, employees, and other stakeholders.

In these undertakings, we shall proceed with caution, knowing that improper actions may result in creating more problems than we wish to solve. There will be a clear, transparent, and comprehensive strategy to achieve targeted milestones. Appropriate legislations will be forwarded for your consideration.

GOVERNANCE AND THE RULE OF LAW

Honorable Legislators,
Under the third pillar of the PRS, Governance and the Rule of Law, we seek to reform the civil service, decentralize governance, strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights, promote a strong and responsible civil society including the media, encourage broad participation in governance, and reduce corruption.

We are pleased to report that consistent with our goals, we have county development agendas, linked to the Poverty Reduction Strategy, for all fifteen counties. This represents the first such local development plans that were prepared under the guidance of the Ministry of Internal Affairs with the participation of local authorities and representatives of the society at large.

Currently under review by the Cabinet are several documents completed by the Governance Commission: the National Public Sector Policy statement, a “Report on the Rationalization and Restructuring of Ministries and Agencies of Government,” and a “National Policy on Decentralization”. Draft legislation where applicable including that which establishes a Law Reform Commission will be submitted within the next few months.

As stated earlier, during the year in review, we increased the minimum salary for civil servants to \$70, representing a composite 400 percent increase during this administration. We still have inherited arrears totaling nearly \$17 million representing over eighteen months of salaries to civil servants that will be fully retired during the course of this year while we finalize plans to address long standing and substantial Foreign Service arrears. A comprehensive Civil Service Reform Strategy is now concluded covering com-

pensation and pension to improve service delivery and to use performance as the main criterion for recruitment, selection, and promotion. Additionally, we have in place three incentive programs under which some 150 nationals at home and abroad bring added capacity and professionalism to public service. Several now serve in our local governance system in the rural areas bringing significant added value to the rural civil service outreach program that was launched during the year.

The final draft of Liberia’s first National Employment Policy, including proposal for the establishment of a National Bureau of Employment, is in the final review process. In the interim, short term job initiatives by the Ministry of Labour have created close to 35,000 short term job opportunities in various sectors, especially waste management, sanitation, and public works. The final draft of a revised Labor Code is also under review and we expect to propose a new minimum wage for the private sector before the end of this year.

I should also note that the merger of the two labor centers—the Liberia Federation of Labour Unions (LFLU) and the Congress of National Trade Unions of Liberia (CONATUL) into the Liberia Labor Congress (LLC) will facilitate consultation and enable the labor union to play a more effective role in enhancing labor rights, in improving the terms and conditions of work for employees, and in the settlement of disputes.

We commend, and we believe you share this sentiment, the Firestone Agricultural Workers Union (FAWUL) for the prestigious George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award that they received last year from the American Federation of Labor Union (AFL-CIO).

Mr. Speaker, Honorable Members of the Legislature,

Under guidance of the Supreme Court and with the participation of the Ministry of Justice as appropriate, our judicial system is undergoing long needed reform. Judges, Magistrates, County Attorneys, and other judicial officials now enjoy higher levels of compensation and better working conditions.

Several challenges remain. The court system seems excessively slow in its processes and dispensation of justice – ultimately judgment. For example, we continue to receive complaints that prisoners are incarcerated without trial for periods as long as and over a year. The jury system also gives concerns as persons considered professional jurors, with compensation as their prime motivation, move from one court to the other.

To enhance the justice system, the Ministry of Justice collaborating with the Judicial Branch has organized a judicial setting at the Monrovia Central Prison where magistrates will dispose of cases, thereby reducing the high level or number of unindicted prisoners. There has also been established a Criminal Court E that will commence work in February to deal exclusively with gender-based violence and the unacceptable high level of rape cases stemming from the violation of young girls, sometimes babies, by cowardly and mentally deranged sex fiends.

The Ministry of Justice has also established a Special Legal Task Force to speed up the prosecution of those charged with corruption. They are working through the Anti-Corruption Commission to obtain order from the court to freeze the assets of persons being investigated or tried for corruption. To its credit, the Ministry has compiled most of the laws passed by this Legislature and opinions handed down by this Supreme Court with the intent to edit and publish these works during this year.

Honorable Legislators,

I am aware that despite strong political will and commitment of this government, the Executive will face a serious challenge in sustaining the gains made in combating corruption given recent public outcry and media reports on perceived corruption in the public sector. Overcoming this challenge will require the collective effort and political will not only on the part of the Executive, but by all three branches of government.

Our effort to promote gender equity and enhance the role and participation of women made significant progress during the past year. For the first time, Liberia's report on national

progress in compliance with UN Resolution on the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was completed. A National Rural Women Program was launched, and a project commenced to build safe homes and establish microcredit operations for women in five counties.

Two innovative interventions will enhance our gender initiative—a \$22 million equivalent grant proposal by the Danish Government to support a program that would make Liberia a model country for the achievement of Millennium Development Goal #5 and a Nike Foundation/World Bank Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girl project that seeks to train 1,500 young women for direct employment placement in our country's private sector.

Honorable Legislators,

We are also pleased to note that The Liberia Education Trust (LET) and the Sirleaf Market Women Fund (SMWF) continue to expand operations in providing scholarships for girls, promoting literacy programs for market women, and building schools and markets throughout the country. Resources mobilized for these projects total over \$6 million, contributed solely by private institutions, foundations, and individuals in response to my personal appeal and my participation in fundraising events. The Minister of Gender and Development and the Chairperson of the African Women Development Fund, Dr. Thelma Awori, have been very instrumental in our success under these two interventions.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro Tempore,

We must continue to identify measures that respond to our youths, who comprise over 45 percent of our population. We are pleased to note that during the year some 1,306 youths benefited from internships and apprenticeship programs primarily in Montserrado and Grand Bassa Counties. A vacation program, the National Youth Volunteer Service, that was launched in 2006 completed a first phase this year with sixty-seven youths serving for six months in rural areas in the health and education sectors.

Emphasis on the training and employment of youth remain a government priority. I would, therefore, like to assure our young citizens that the Youth Policy document that was completed during the year can be launched immediately. Our delay and concern regard the generality of the provisions of that document. Realistically, only specific elements of that policy can be carried forward into law that is enforceable. I, therefore, appeal to the youth representatives, particularly the Federation of Liberian Youth, to appoint representatives who will work with us to achieve the objectives of finalizing a direct act whose provisions can be respected and enforced.

We are equally pleased to report that Liberia won the championship for the second Amputee African Nations Cup and the second place in the Guinea Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) cycling tour for peace. We also witnessed and participated in a successful county meet that saw Sinoe and Rivercess win the basketball and kickball competition. Bomi County successfully competed with River Gee County to win the football competition. I am also pleased to note Liberia's participation in the Beijing Olympics.

Government continues to strengthen its information dissemination and public awareness apparatus. Although the challenges are many, we have made a number of strides in this regard. We held a country-wide competition to solicit names for our Poverty Reduction Strategy, and at the end of a two-week naming search, my Cabinet and I settled on the name "Lift Liberia," suggested by Dr. Shadrack Bryant, a Liberian residing in Gardnesville. This was just the beginning of branding our national development agenda.

The Ministry of Information, in collaboration with the Executive Mansion, has developed a comprehensive communications strategy for the PRS that includes a number of non-conventional tools for engagement. This is now in the implementation phase and will require a mass effort by all of us to fund the strategy. The Ministry of Information has also collaborated with media development agencies and the Press Union of Liberia to draft and submit three acts to the

Legislature establishing an independent commission to regulate broadcast media, making freedom of information a law, and establishing a public broadcasting entity. We ask your early action in passing these acts into law.

The Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism (MICAT) has also established a "war room" to gather, analyze, and respond to reports in the media that require clarification or follow up; revitalized the Liberia News Agency (LINA); re-stocked artifacts at the National Museum; established the Bai T. Moore Research Room as a center for learning and appreciation of Liberia's rich cultural heritage; and revamped the New Liberia Newspaper and its website (www.newliberia.com.lr). In continuance of MICAT's mandate to harness public information dissemination, ministries and autonomous agencies continue to strengthen relations with the independent media through weekly press briefings and regular interactions.

New news is provided on a daily basis on our Executive Mansion website (www.emansion.gov.lr), whose hits increased from 5 million in 2007 to 8 million in 2008. Because we understand the fundamental importance of information dissemination as a tool of empowerment, fourteen government ministry websites are now accessible and fully stocked with customized information related to the PRS. A number of autonomous agencies are also online, and we will continue to work to bring "government to the people" via the World Wide Web.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND BASIC SERVICES

My Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Legislators,

The key objectives of our fourth pillar, Infrastructure and Basic Services, are to rebuild the physical and social infrastructure that was totally destroyed over the past several years. Those include roads, ports, telecommunications, electricity generation, water and sanitation, schools, and health care facilities. We also seek improved service delivery to an increasing number of citizens.

In clear priorities set by the majority of our citizens during the PRS consultations, the reconstruction of roads and bridges remain our focus. We are, therefore, always questioned by you and the public at large as to why it is taking so long to respond to this critical need. The truth is we have not waited but have worked hard to mobilize the resources for this high capital cost activity. We have also had to respect the procedures and competitive processes required by our own laws and that of our partners.

As you can now see, the process is on. Rehabilitation of Tubman Boulevard and the ELWA to RIA road are nearing completion. The contractor is expected to commence work on the next segment of the Cotton Tree to Buchanan Road. Design for other primary roads is underway in preparation for the start of rehabilitation as soon as the funds are mobilized. Work on our Monrovia city streets, which have gone for many years without maintenance, will start in two weeks when the contractor is fully mobilized. In two years, all of the city streets will be fully rehabilitated. Demolition of the old and construction of the new Vai Town Bridge will start within two weeks and be fully completed next year. There is no short cut to getting the job done well.

During the year, we concluded the rehabilitation of 380 miles of roads in 12 counties and are continuing to work on community roads in the Monrovia area, as well as critical primary and secondary roads in the counties. Our learning experience on the Jallah Town Road proved to be an important reality check leading us to conclude a contractual arrangement for upgrading of that important roadway.

Roads to the southeast of the country that will stand all weather conditions remain a challenge that we have begun to tackle and hope to have fully resolved before the end of next year. The Engineering Contingent of UNMIL continues to be helpful to us in this regard.

The conditions of our five national ports are dismal, despite progress in improving service efficiency. The need to remove sunken vessels, to repair badly damaged piers, and to undertake dredging is critical to meeting international standards with implications for freight costs that

are reflected in commodity prices on the local market. Given the government's resource constraints, we have started the process that will lead to the development and management of several of our ports through the "Build, Operate, Transfer (BOT) Scheme". For some, such as the Buchanan and Maryland ports, it may be the case of similar arrangements with major users. Until such arrangements are fully in place, we will need to meet the challenges of control of theft, particularly at the port of Monrovia, by rigorous action in staff changes, transfers, and dismissals.

Honorable Legislators,

The Cabinet now has under review a National Energy Policy that will guide our choice of the several options that exist in the energy sector. During the past year, we increased the generation of electricity to 7.8 megawatts, enabling us to service street lights and customers in Bushrod Island, Central Monrovia, Sinkor, and Congo Town. We should be able to reach many more individual and institutional users when ongoing efforts to expand the transmission and distribution systems are realized.

With the support of our development partners and in collaboration with the West Africa Power Pool (WAPP), we continue to make progress in our commitment to bring modern energy services to our rural citizens. The Cross-Border Power Supply Project, coordinated by the WAPP and funded by the European Union, the Government of Cote d'Ivoire, and the Government of Liberia, will facilitate the supply of electricity from our neighbor Cote d'Ivoire to eighteen Liberian rural border towns, and cities. These eighteen communities are as follows:

- Nimba County: Logatou, Duoplay, Karnplay, Sanniquellie, Ganta, Tappitta, Diala, and Yekepa;
- Grand Gedeh County: Toe Town, Zleh Town, and Zwedru;
- River Gee County: Fish Town; and
- Maryland County: Cavalla, Harper, Whole Graway, Rock Town, Fiah Town, and Pleebo.

The Liberia Electric Company (LEC) has completed mapping of these towns, and bids tendering for implementation is expected in March. The Liberian Government has thus far contributed \$201,000 to support the LEC's full participation in this project and contributed over \$500,000 to the WAPP Secretariat towards this project implementation. We thank you for approval of these funds in the budget, and we are hopeful of the impact that completion of this project will have on these rural communities.

The pilot solar power projects funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented through the Liberia Electricity Assistance Program (LEAP) has already covered Bong, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Lofa, Nimba, Sinoe, and Rivercess counties with various solar technologies at clinics, schools, community centers, small businesses, and for street lights. With the recorded satisfactory success of the pilot projects, we will now move along quickly to complete the remaining pilots in other counties and launch full scale implementation around the country.

Our government's commitment to expanding access to quality education remains undaunted. National enrollment now stands at close to 1.3 million. As a result of implementation of the Free and Compulsory Primary Education Policy, primary school enrollment increased from 375,277 during the 2004-2005 academic year to 1,107,271 over the period of this administration, representing an impressive 195 percent increase. Similarly, secondary enrollment increased from 89,746 to 158,242 over the same period under review, representing about 76 percent.

At the tertiary level, total enrollment for the recognized seven baccalaureate degree granting institutions currently stands at 29,545 with the University of Liberia accounting for 18,615, representing about 63 percent.

In recognition of the important role of education, we have provided a significantly higher level of support to the University of Liberia. The subsidy to the University in 2008-2009 of over \$4 million approved by you represents 54 percent of the University's budget of \$7.4 million. The subsidy enables the institution to serve the needs of

17,467 undergraduate students in six colleges and 1,200 students in four graduate and three professional schools. About 26 percent of the university total enrollment is female. A standing faculty of 318 represents a faculty to student ratio of 1 to 56. Perhaps of more consequence to the quality of instruction is the restoration of facilities at the Fendall Campus. Works on dormitories and teachers housing are now underway with dedication and occupancy expected by the end of 2010.

The challenges at our nation's only institution of higher learning remain daunting. A slack admission policy has led to an excessive student population on facilities meant to serve much fewer numbers. The lack of sufficient qualified and tenured professors and instructional materials such as books and good laboratory equipment undermines our goal of quality education.

We expect some of these problems to be tackled by the new President of the University, Dr. Emmet Dennis, who was selected during the course of last year and is to take office the 1st of February. At the same time, we commend Dr. Al-Hassan Conteh for his significant contribution and service to the University and are pleased that he will continue to serve his country in the important post of Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

In terms of educational facilities, we completed throughout the country the renovation of fifty-four primary schools and constructed an additional 115 new ones with designing and construction of another forty underway. The renovation and construction of eleven high schools are also underway as is the \$20 million Fendall facility for the University of Liberia. Our success in advocating support from the Government and religious institutions of Italy is now realized as the Dogliotti Medical College will be rehabilitated. Through our own budget support, renovation work has started on the WVS Tubman Technical College in Harper for an opening in September 2009 and full operations in 2010. We are pleased to commend the return of our own daughter, Dr. Elizabeth Davis-Russell, who left a deanship at a U.S. university to make sacrificial service by assuming the Presidency of the College.

We also note with satisfaction that the rehabilitated rural teacher training institutions at Kakata and Zorzor are now in full operations as we conclude arrangements for similar work at the institution in Webbo.

Honorable Legislators,

The pledge made by former U.S. President George Bush, when he visited Liberia in February 2008, has been met. Some 10,000 pieces of furniture and 600,000 books were distributed to schools. We are pleased that USAID has changed procedures so that the remaining supply of 400,000 textbooks will be produced along with the government's order of books that conform to our curriculum. Through government's own budgetary resources, 200,000 sets of primary school textbooks and 5,000 sets of teachers' guides will be available for distribution to schools throughout the country this year. Several improvements to our educational system will be enhanced by the establishment of the Liberian Education Pool Fund, which is intended to better harmonize partnership support to the sector.

The issue of qualified teachers is a continuing challenge as we will have to retire, with benefits totaling almost \$1.1 million, the majority of the 7,056 volunteer teachers who did not meet the requisite qualification to continue to teach at the level they have been doing in our schools. At the same time, our policy of shifting priority from foreign training to development of local training institutions remains on course as we provided scholarships to 2,344 students at local institutions at a cost of about \$500,000. Nevertheless, through scholarships provided by bilateral partners and foreign institutions, we have over 200 students pursuing studies in ten friendly countries.

Honorable Legislators,

We are pleased to report that a strong signal of partnership and security was sent to the world by the return of the U.S. Peace Corps and the opening of the American International School (AIS). We must now address the questionable judicial action that now risks the closure of AIS.

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Legislators,

Our country's health sector continues to make progress toward fulfillment of our primary goal of increasing the basic package of health services to an increasing number of the population. In pursuit of this goal we increased to 91 percent the number of our children immunized. Liberia was thus declared polio free by the African Regional Certification Committee of the World Health Organization.

Medical service to other groups in the society expanded, with 550,000 prenatal mothers and 650,000 children immunized against measles, neonate tetanus, and other deficiencies. The distribution of 871,000 treated mosquito bed nets continues our overall fight against malaria, which remains a major health hazard. Progress in the containment of HIV/AIDS is notable, resulting from the expansion in counseling and testing treatment sites.

As reported last year, fifteen county hospitals are now functioning, including the renovated and expanded Telewoyan Hospital in Voinjama, which includes residential houses for doctors. The hospital will receive additional support from the Swiss government for operational cost for the next three years. We have also started the renovation of clinics, eight completed during the past year, and the establishment of midwifery schools, two established in Zwedru and Zorzor during the year. With the participation of some of you, Honorable Legislators, we broke grounds for construction of a \$10 million hospital in Tappita; and we expect to complete construction of the Foya Health Center and the CB Dunbar Hospital in Gbarnga before the end of this year.

The positive trends of progress in the health sector are not matched by programs of assistance to the physically challenged and by an adoption program that has gone amok. We must do more to improve the living and training conditions for our disabled, and I will ask for your support in this regard in the next fiscal year budget.

The gross mismanagement of the adoption program (which aims primarily at placing orphans in homes in the United States), by both

Liberian and U.S. personnel in the concerned NGO is the subject of a report by a Special Committee that I appointed for this purpose. Essentially, we have discovered that many of the children in these orphanages are not in fact orphans but children taken from their living parents on the promise of support and a good life in America. Moreover, we found that young children were being sexually abused at some of these orphanages, while others—including officials of government—have used the program to extort money from potential adopters. We have thus suspended the adoption program until laws, policies, and proper guidelines have been established. We have asked our concerned friends and partners in the United States to be patient as we try to correct the serious malpractices that exist. We expect the National Social Welfare Policy and National Adoption Act that will be submitted to you during the course of the year will provide guidance and prevent such abuses in the future.

Honorable Legislators,

The Ministry of Health has made the most progress in the establishment of financial management systems. In recognition of this achievement, the pool fund established last year for the sector attracted the support and the praise of several of our development partners.

Honorable Legislators,

Despite the continued low capacity of the White Plains Treatment Plant, water supply to the Greater Monrovia area increased by 40 percent, reaching several new communities in Clara town, New Kru town, and S.K. Doe, expanding to thousands of new customers. The Mamba Point high enclave area should be served after commissioning of the facilities early next month. We are also pleased to note that pipeborne water has been restored to Kakata, and efforts are under way to restore supply to Zwedru, Voinjama, Robertsport, Greenville, and Buchanan. Other rural cities will be targeted with success in our mobilization effort.

Access to sanitation facilities remains a challenge as the Monrovia sewage system is largely

inoperable since its four main lift pumps stations and pipelines were looted and vandalized during the years of conflict. However, with extraordinary support from the Government of Turkey through our Ambassador in Washington D.C., we have addressed the problem of sewage spilling on to the street. Until our sanitation facilities are restored, the public continues to rely on personal septic tanks and on government constructed public toilets.

After a long period of planning and resource mobilization, the Liberia Telecommunication Corporation is now ready for business in providing a wide range of services, including the restoration of fax facilities. They will compete in certain categories with the four Global System for Mobile (GSM) companies that operate. We are also pleased to report that in keeping with the Telecommunications Act that you passed last year, we have made significant progress in negotiating the standardization of licenses for Lone Star and Libercell. This is a clear victory for the national interest, consistent with the practice in other African countries. Many of you may recall that licenses were granted to all GSM companies for \$50,000 per annum for variable tenures ranging from ten to fifteen years. They will now be standardized at a fee of \$15 million each with rights over a fifteen year period. Appropriate measures are now being considered to ensure compliance by the other two GSM companies.

Honorable Legislators,

We expect that with the completion of the National Transport Policy that the government will be better positioned to coordinate and ensure regulation of our road and air transport systems with proper attention to be paid to the development of a much needed sea transport system. In the meanwhile, we note the progress made at Robert International Airport and at James Spriggs Field Airfield under the Liberian Domestic Airport Agency. At both facilities, we have witnessed an increased level of passengers and freight and a resumption of commercial flights from Sprigs to several domestic locations. We are also pleased to note that the Liberia Civil

Aviation Agency (LCAA) has been successful in retuning to Liberia the Flight Information Regional (FIR) Center and in concluding arrangements for direct flights from the United States to Liberia by Delta Airways starting in June this year. The LCAA has also been instrumental in the start up of negotiations with the Lockheed-Martin Corporation of the United States for the development and management of Roberts International Airport.

Mr. Speaker,

We commend the significant progress made in public transport in Monrovia and its environs by the new Managing Director Mr. Senwan Wiah and his team at the Monrovia Transport Authority (MTA). MTA commuted over a million residents during the reporting period and is set to expand its service when the ongoing process to purchase 40 buses is concluded. Establishment of the National Transport Authority will facilitate the extension of public transport service to several other counties.

Mr. Speaker,

We are pleased to report that Liberia's voting rights at the Universal Postal Union and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) have been restored, and that these institutions are providing support to our Ministry of Post and Telecommunications in expanding services and building our ITC Training Center in Voinjama. The Ministry has also constructed or rehabilitated twenty-three post offices nationwide, including several in Montserrado, Bomi, Grand Bassa, Margibi, Bong, Grand Gedeh, Nimba, and Lofa. Inbound and outbound mail delivery has increased significantly. Supported by a grant from the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, a feasibility study is being conducted for the construction of a fiber optic network in Monrovia and its environs.

PARTNERSHIP

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, our nation continues to enjoy strong partnership from all over the world. In our own region and continent, sisterly states of Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, and

Rwanda assist in providing logistics and training in our security sector. Morocco, Egypt, and Namibia support our training initiatives. On the bilateral side, our key partner is the United States, joined by China, Germany, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, France, Japan, Ireland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the European Union. The support from these partners is directed at all sectors and is increasingly harmonized and coordinated toward support of the development agenda set forth by the PRS. This coordinated approach will guide the allocation of some \$300 million to support the Health and Education Pool Funds, as well as to the Liberia Infrastructure Fund that was established at the June Berlin Meeting and has a current commitment of approximately \$127 million.

Our multilateral partners, which include the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Africa Development Bank, and the United Nations System, are equally supportive and active. The World Bank has provided support of nearly \$100 million for economic governance, rehabilitation of infrastructure and urban waste management, and agricultural development. The IMF through the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility approved in December will provide \$10 million in equipment in support of the capitalization of the Central Bank. The Africa Development Bank (ADB) has provided support of \$39 million to support institutional capacity building and infrastructure development, particularly road rehabilitation. The United Nations System, which serves as a financial interceptor and manager for other multilateral funds provided through its several agencies and funds, an estimated additional \$150 million. This does not include allocation for the operations of UNMIL, which is correctly estimated at \$600 million annually.

Honorable Legislators,

We are pleased to report that while previously the vast majority of external support was channeled through NGOs and contractors, the year 2008 saw a significant increase in donor support to the government's budget. We thank the Government of France for \$1.2 million and the Government of China for \$1 million, both

sums already allocated in the 2007-2008 supplemental budget. We now expect \$5 million from the World Bank and \$18 million from the Africa Development Bank, which will cover expected revenue shortfall and cover specific expenditure items.

We continue to enjoy the confidence and support from non-official partners. The Soros Foundation and Open Society Initiative has provided support on the order of \$20 million for our Education Pool Fund, economic and legal advisory services, Senior Executive, and Capacity Development Program. The McCall MacBain Foundation has committed over \$10 million in eleven grants to support our urban transport program with ten buses to the Monrovia Transit Authority, construction of children playgrounds in Montserrado, Maryland, Sinoe, and Grand Gedeh through the NGO Right to Play, the construction of the Midwifery School in Zwedru, and the biomass power plant whose concession agreement is before you. There is also the Scott Family Fellowship that provides funding of \$1 million to support six young professionals to serve in the public service over a period of three years. The program has been expanded to nine additional fellows with support from the Soros Foundation. They add great value to our capacity development. We also continue to receive support from several foundations, institutions, and individuals for programs under the Liberia Education Trust and the Sirleaf Market Women Fund.

In September of last year, we organized in New York with philanthropist George Soros a first Foundation Partnership Meeting intended to achieve more harmony and coordination of programs by our foundation partners. A Secretariat has been established in our Liberia Reconstruction and Development Committee (LRDC) to follow up and institutionalize this coordination.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Honorable Legislators,
The guiding principles of Liberia's foreign policy are the maintenance of national security for the protection of our territorial integrity and sovereignty, the promotion of peace, harmony, and

unity among nations in our region, continent, and the world. There are currently eighteen diplomatic missions resident in Monrovia, twenty-eight non-resident Ambassadors accredited to the Republic, one Honorary Consul, and one Consulate General. An additional six Ambassadors have received their Agrément and await presentation of their letters of credence.

Liberia maintains abroad twenty-two diplomatic missions, including the Mission to Senegal opened last year, and two consular posts. We are pleased that our foreign envoys, charged with promoting the principle of economic diplomacy, now enjoy a better level of compensation that, as at home, is paid on time. We are also pleased that Liberia has regained its place in pride and reputation throughout the world. We expect a further enhancement of this image when the new passports that are ready to be issued in June of this year, bring to an end the use of our passports by those who obtained them through fraudulent means.

We should also report that significant progress was made during the last year in the legal step being taken to reclaim government properties in Paris, Nairobi, and other places that were sold or pledged against personal loans by unscrupulous officials of the past who will be exposed as soon as those cases have been concluded. We must also note that we are pursuing legal action against certain current officials serving abroad who continue to engage in corrupt practices in collusion with officials at home.

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

I am pleased to report that as a result of a positive image abroad and significant development progress at home, we continue to attract the visit of high level personnel to our country. During the course of the year, we received several such persons. This includes: U.S. President George Bush, the first in twenty years to visit Liberia; President John Kufuor of Ghana; Former Presidents Jerry Rawlings, Nicéphore Soglo, Joaquim Chissano, Ketumile Masire, and Sam Nujoma of the Africa Forum; World Bank President Robert Zoellick; Former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari; FAO Director General

Jacques Diouf; UNICEF Executive Director Ann Veneman; US Congressional Delegation Head Senator Bill Nelson; Chairman of RLJ Companies Robert Johnson; Soros Foundation Chairman George Soros; and Millennium Village Founder, Professor Jeffery Sachs.

I was privileged to pay state visits to our sister Republic of La Cote d'Ivoire and to the Republic of Namibia. I also had the opportunity to visit U.S. President George Bush for the third and last time and to meet with former President Nelson Mandela and officials of the South African Government when I gave the "Sixth Annual Nelson Mandela Lecture" in July as part of the celebration of President Mandela's 90th birthday.

Other travels abroad aimed at participation in ECOWAS and African Union Meetings in Burkina Faso, Algeria, Egypt, the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the Progressive Governance Summit in London, the Aid Effectiveness Forum in Accra, following which several Development Ministers from major partners visited Liberia, and the MDCB Conference in Copenhagen. I was also privileged to give commencement addresses at the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, and to three U.S. universities: Brown University, Indiana University, and Dartmouth College, where I received Honorary Doctorate Degrees. I also gave the Commencement Address and received an Honorary Degree from one of our own—African Methodist University—and was honored with prestigious awards from four other international institutions including the International Crisis Group.

I am particularly pleased to report that under Liberia's Chair of the Mano River Union (MRU), we witnessed the expansion of the Union in May last year with the accession of La Cote d'Ivoire as the fourth member state. Subsequently, at a summit of Heads of State in December in Sierra Leone in which President Gbagbo was personally in attendance, a plan of action that places emphasis on the agriculture and security sectors was agreed.

The Union continues to be faced with challenges, most recently the developments in the wake of the death of President Conteh of Guinea that the MRU countries are trying to manage.

OBITUARY

Honorable Legislators,

During last year, several current and former government officials, prominent and law abiding colleagues were called to the great beyond.

Among those were:

- Honourable Isaac Johnson, former Senator, River Gee County;
- Honourable Isaac Charyien Nyeplu, former Minister of Justice & Attorney General;
- Counsellor Lawrence Alford Morgan, Former Senator, Grand Bassa County;
- Honourable Kebbeh Ballah Zuku Freeman, former Member of the House of Representatives, Montserrado County;
- Honourable James Kla Giko, former Member and First Deputy Speaker, Transitional Legislative Assembly (TLA);
- Honourable John D. Lasana, Sr. Stipendiary Magistrate of Arthington City, Montserrado County;
- Honourable Isaac Saye Mussah, former Member of the House of Representatives of the Second National Transitional Government of Liberia;
- His Excellency Mr. Francis Alphonso Dennis, Sr., former Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary;
- Honourable J. Sabto-Wiah, former Minister Counsellor/Press Attaché;
- Rev. Nathaniel T. Dixon, former Press and Financial Attaché;
- Rev. Dr. Advertus Arthur Hoff, Sr., former Minister of Education;
- Honourable Nora Lovo Korvah, former Deputy Minister for Operation, Ministry of Gender and Development;
- Honourable Joseph K. Yourwatei, Sr., former Deputy Minister Operation, Ministry of Internal Affairs;
- Honourable Nathaniel Reginald Richardson, Jr., former Director, Liberian Geological Survey;
- Honourable Frederick Russell Deshield, Sr., former Deputy Minister for Administration, Ministry of Information, Culture and

Tourism; and

- Honourable Ambrose Mohammed Kromah, former Senior Communication Officer/Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

The list also included:

- Honourable Julu Mah Johnson, former Acting Minister of Lands, Mines and Energy;
- Honourable Sewell Telfore Prout Brewer, Sr., former Chief Engineer, Liberia Telecommunications Corporation (LTC);
- Honourable Oliver Bor-Yee Toe Swen, Sr., Attorney-At-Law, Chief Prosecutor for Government;
- Honourable Jeremiah Bishop Johnson, Sr., former Development Superintendent, Grand Bassa County;
- Honourable Charles V. Dormeyan, Sr., former Development Superintendent, Bong County;
- Mother ADA Amorette Phebean Decker Goodings, former District Supervisor of Schools, Margibi County;
- Honourable Francis Dugbe-Nmeh Pelenah, Sr., Defense Counsel of Grand Kru County;
- Professor Victor-Emmanuel Larteyvi Lawson, former Chairman, Department of English and Literature, Liberia College, University of Liberia;
- Mr. Lafayette Henry Montgomery, Sr., Proprietor of Montgomery's One Hour;
- Mrs. Louise Ether Barnard-Reeves, former Member of the House of Representatives, Grand Bassa County;
- Mrs. Matee Mardea Cephas-Cooper, widow of the late Willie G. Cooper, Butler to former President; and
- Mrs. Farmatta Lucretia James-Snetter, widow of former Ambassador Charles A. Snetter, Sr.

May their souls rest in perfect and everlasting peace.

Mr. President of the Senate, Mr. Speaker,
Honorable Members of the Legislature,

Let me now address a few issues that have serious implication for our national development effort.

ARMY WORM INVASION

I know that we all share the alarm and the deep concern over the emergence of the army of tent worms that have invaded our county with the potential to set back our progress in the production of food and export crops. Ongoing investigation shows that sixty-two communities in Bong and some parts of Lower Lofa and Gbarpolu counties involving some 350,000 inhabitants may have already been affected. Five of the twenty-eight affected communities in Zota District of Bong County are bordering neighboring Guinea and there are indications that several villages in Guinea are now experiencing similar invasion. This is indeed a crisis, and I hereby declare a state of national emergency with particular emphasis on the existing and potentially affected counties.

The government has taken immediate initial steps to respond to the crisis. A task force under the Ministry of Agriculture with support of the Ministry of Health has been established. The technical team has identified and classified the species and has commenced spraying in the affected areas. Water and food are being supplied to the most vulnerable and displaced. Meetings have been held with our partners; several international organizations have responded to our appeal and will be sending experts and supplies to supplement our effort.

More effort and more resources are required if we are to be successful in containing this problem. I have, therefore, instructed the Minister of Finance to identify budgetary resources from any source possible that can be used to meet the needs that are required. He knows that this will not be the time for long procurement procedures and bureaucratic hurdles.

I have also called upon our partners for urgent response to our appeal, and I expect to review the effectiveness of our combined response when I meet with them on Wednesday.

CORRUPTION

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by the government over the past several months is corruption. It is a national malaise, long standing and deeply entrenched in all levels of society. It stems from years of depravation, poor salaries, lack of a pension scheme at the lower levels, an environment of impunity, and tolerance of greed at higher levels.

The fight against corruption has started. Through investigations, auditing, and whistle blowing, we are uncovering and exposing acts of corruption. Officials have been suspended, fired, and turned over to the Ministry of Justice for prosecution and/or restitution of government assets. At the same time, we have increased the compensation and pension for civil servants, concluded the biometric program for civil servants, removed ghost names from the payroll, strengthened the Government Auditing Commission, adopted an Anticorruption Policy and Strategy, established an Anticorruption Commission, and established the Liberian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, going beyond the required to include revenues from forestry operations.

Honorable Legislators,

I am happy to note that for once in the history of our country, the fight against corruption has been elevated to a pedestal of prominence and widespread public concern that bears testimony to the success of our strategy. Now, unlike in the past, we have a capacitated Auditing Commission and audit reports are now being received. Now, unlike in the past, we have an Anti-Corruption Commission that will be playing a frontal role in the investigation of corruption. Now, unlike in the past, we have a free press that is not intimidated by big powers when alleged acts of corruption are reported, even though the press themselves sometimes get their facts wrong. Now, unlike in the past, the man in the street can call on a talk-show and freely express himself on issues of corruption. That corruption has gained such a prominence in our national debate is in itself a commendable achievement of this regime. For one way to deal with a chronic sore is to

expose it to sunshine. Unfortunately, however, our success in exposing this menace to the sunshine has yielded unintended consequences as it has led to the mistaken belief in some quarters that corruption is on an upward swing just because the reportage of corruption has increased today as compared to the past. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Honorable Legislators,

The fight against corruption does not come to an end with the mere exposure of corruption. We must act. The Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary must act decisively and collaboratively to deal with the scourge. On the side of the Executive, we have taken some actions and will take other drastic actions in the coming weeks and months. However, we must act methodically, maturely, and judiciously, and not haphazardly just to satisfy the whims of a critic.

The steps we have taken thus far in the war against corruption helped us move up in the rankings and were recognized by the World Bank and the Mo Ibrahim governance indicators as one of the countries having made the best progress in fighting corruption.

Yet, Honorable Legislators, serious challenges still remain in this battle for which we have been criticized. This largely has to do with the slow process involved in the prosecution of those who have violated the public trust. This is a matter of justice and of judicial process that we have to respect. Unfounded and misdirected accusations will only undermine the government's effort and discourage the investors we need to expand our economy with benefits to all segments of society. We also know that all of these measures and progress will not produce the truly sustainable results that we seek unless there are systems improvements, and professional and apolitical financial audits.

However, we have not and will not relent in moving this process forward, and we will take other harsh measures to ensure that this battle is won. We cannot do this alone. Your help, the help of civil society, the help of the media, the religious institutions, and the National Bar Association will be required, for we know that

corruption lies deep at the foundation of our country's underdevelopment.

COUNTY DEVELOPMENT FUND

Mr. Speaker, Honorable Legislators:

For the first time in the history of our nation, this administration allocated a total amount of \$9.5 million, specifically for the counties in a process that allowed for the determination of development priorities by the people themselves. In the recast budget February to June, we provided \$1 million, 2006/2007; \$2.5 million, 2007/2008; and \$3 million 2008/2009, which was allocated equally for each county. This allocation adopted the same principle of participation by the people, and you added a role for the county legislative caucus in the budget.

Although many projects have been constructed in the counties to the satisfaction of the residents, much is left to be desired to obtain maximum results from this important initiative. We are thus in the process of introducing changes so that the process is truly participatory, that goods and services are provided locally as much as possible, and that systems of accountability are more rigorous and transparent with more effective oversight and reporting by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

An Independent Inspection Task force headed by Mr. Sam Jackson has been established to visit the projects in all counties so as to provide the information and advice that will enable us to achieve these objectives.

I ask that with these measures that the Legislature withdraw from its active role in the determination and implementation of these projects. This will allow the Executive to take full responsibility in carrying out its role as dictated by the constitution without prejudice to your oversight role as also dictated by the constitution.

FOOD, FUEL & FINANCIAL CRISES

Honorable Legislators,

In the last three years, we have seen a steady acceleration of growth, with the economy growing 8 percent in 2006, 9.5 percent in 2007, and then an estimated 7.1 percent in 2008. This latest

dip reflects the challenges that the economy faced in the last year. Most notably, during the year under review, the global economy was buffeted by a trinity of crises: the food, fuel, and financial crises, presenting untold challenges for the government and the people of Liberia.

First, food and fuel prices rose on the world market, with the price of rice doubling and fuel and electricity costs increasing, causing great hardships here in Liberia. While still grappling with the adverse effects of the food and fuel crises, a third crisis, dubbed the "financial crisis" reared its ugly head. Having its origins in the U.S. sub-prime home mortgage market, the financial crisis precipitated a credit crunch and set off panic in the global economy, leading to the collapse of leading financial institutions in the U.S. and Europe and a precipitous drop in global demand for key commodities.

Honorable Legislators,

The financial crisis has to a large extent been a 'mixed curse' for Liberia. For on the one hand, it occasioned downward movements in the prices of two of our most strategic imports, rice and fuel, thereby bringing much needed relief to our people; but on the other, it has led to a significant drop in the prices of our key exports, especially rubber and iron-ore, and consequently poses a threat to our revenue generating capacity.

As a way of mitigating the adverse impacts of the crisis on our populace, we took a number of measures including the elimination of tariff on rice imports that translates to revenue forgone of nearly \$9 million in the current budget, eliminated personal income tax on all persons in the public and private sector earning monthly incomes of \$70 and below, and waived duties on agricultural and construction equipment. We also more than quadrupled the subsidy to the well performing Monrovia Transit Authority (MTA) to enable it to acquire more buses and critical spare parts, and we doubled the budgetary appropriation of the Ministry of Agriculture to enable it to tackle pre and post-harvest losses sustained by our farmers.

Besides steps taken domestically to cushion the impact of the crises on the population, we engaged our partners to help us steer through the

turbulence. We are accordingly grateful to the World Bank for \$10 million in assistance to be used to feed vulnerable segments of our population and for cash for work programs, to the African Development Bank for an estimated \$4.5 million, and to the Japanese Government for an as yet to be realized \$6 million equivalent to cover rice imports. We also have received from the World Food Program a commitment of \$41 million over a three year period for food supply and agriculture development.

More precisely, the financial crisis led to a sharp decline in the price of rubber. From October 2008 to January 2009, rubber prices dropped from \$1,425 to \$525 per ton, thus interrupting the operations and replanting programs of thousands of small and medium sized plantations and will result in unemployment, lost income, and reduced government taxes for the large farms and plantations, perhaps as high as \$3 million in the next year. We have already received formal notice or indication of a reduction in the size of planned investment and a slow down in operations of those ongoing.

Our Central Bank will be hit by loss of income from reduced interest rates on their foreign deposits. Commercial banks and local beneficiaries have felt the blow from reduced remittances from abroad, which affects local investment and consumption. The opportunity side of this crisis is that we must do more to encourage local production, particularly food. We must move quickly in our effort to reactivate and replant traditional export crops such as rubber, oil palm, coffee, and cocoa so that we are positioned to benefit when the production swings once again to buoyant world commodity prices.

Yet, it is important that the government responds to the crisis in pursuit of the objectives stated by providing some stimuli no matter how moderate given the existing fiscal constraints.

Mr. Speaker and Honorable Members of the Legislature,

We are therefore pleased to propose the following measures:

- reduction of the business income tax rate from 35 percent to 25 percent;
- reduction of the personal income tax rate from 35 percent to 25 percent;
- reduction in the presumptive tax on businesses with turnovers above L\$201,000 from 4 percent to 2 percent of their gross quarterly income;
- reduction of the ECOWAS trade levy from 1 percent to 0.75 percent; and
- elimination of the 2 percent advance tax as a minimum tax on businesses with turnovers above L\$5 million.

These tax rate revisions form part of the comprehensive revision of the revenue code that is presently being finalized. However, in order to ensure that the Liberian people begin to benefit from the relief that is embedded in these tax reductions, I will be submitting my proposals for tax reductions in the next few days.

In addition to these tax reduction measures, I am also pleased to note the following measures:

- As a result of market forces of supply and demand, the price of butter rice has been reduced from \$35 to \$30;
- An opening of the rice market to other importers for all grades of rice, except those prohibited for the protection of citizens;
- The establishment of a \$1 million facility at the Central Bank for the purchase of paddy rice from local producers. This will serve as an incentive to stimulate production in the coming planting season. I am also pleased to announce the launch of a pilot program whereby ten persons each from all 14 counties not including Montserrado who are resident in Monrovia and willing to relocate to another county or to their county of origin will be provided five acres of land in fee simply for the planting of rice or tree crops for which seeds and cutting will be provided; and
- Reduction of import duty and goods and services tax on buses with twenty-four seats or more from a total of 18 percent to 2.5

percent. This measure is intended to encourage private sector actors to intervene more robustly in the transport sector as a means of alleviating the hardship our people encounter in getting transport.

In order to give added incentive to the margin of preference for Liberian businesses that is included in the revised incentive code that will soon be presented to you, the Economic Management Team of the Government is presently considering the establishment of a \$2 million guarantee fund at the Central Bank to support Liberian businesses. The criteria and modalities for operationalising such a scheme are also being considered.

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Mr. President Pro-Tempore, Honorable Legislators,

Our country embarked upon a journey that commenced on January 16, 2006; a journey embedded in the dream of a peaceful and prosperous nation based upon proper allocation and use of our national resources in ensuring equity and equal opportunity for all our citizens. That dream envisioned that we had the courage to depart from the ways of the past that have kept our country underdeveloped, our people divided, and our children devoid of hope in the future.

We have come a long way in the journey and in the fulfillment of our dream. I have just recounted the progress that we have made in just three years of this Government. There may be those whose hate, guilt, and fears prevent them from being a part of this great journey. There may be those who, lacking the courage to dream and to accept the reality of progress, can only stand on the sidelines seeing only the difficulties and the shortcomings. There are also those who simply want us to return to the habits of old: plunder, lawlessness, and indiscipline.

But let us thank God for the thousands of Liberians, particularly those in our rural communities, who share in our dream of reform and change, those who are thankful and have made the sacrifice and the contribution to get us where we are today. For them, we cannot stop but must

stay the course. To them, we must pledge our continued commitment to a legacy that will see Liberia, three years from now, a better place than we found it. This legacy is also yours, as we together continue on this journey of courage, hope, and promise toward the fulfillment of the now possible dream.

As I draw to a close, there is no doubt that our challenges remain enormous. But we remain committed to ongoing reform and change, knowing that the resistance from the minority is bound to become more intense as the majority sense and feel the progress that is being made. I said last year, and I say again, we will bear the cross, we will stay the course, we will carry the load for that is the only way to ensure that we achieve our Poverty Reduction goals to “Lift Liberia,” thereby enabling our nation to consolidate the gains on this irreversible road to a participatory democracy in which rights are protected, freedom is enjoyed with responsibility, and there is social equity and equal opportunity for all.

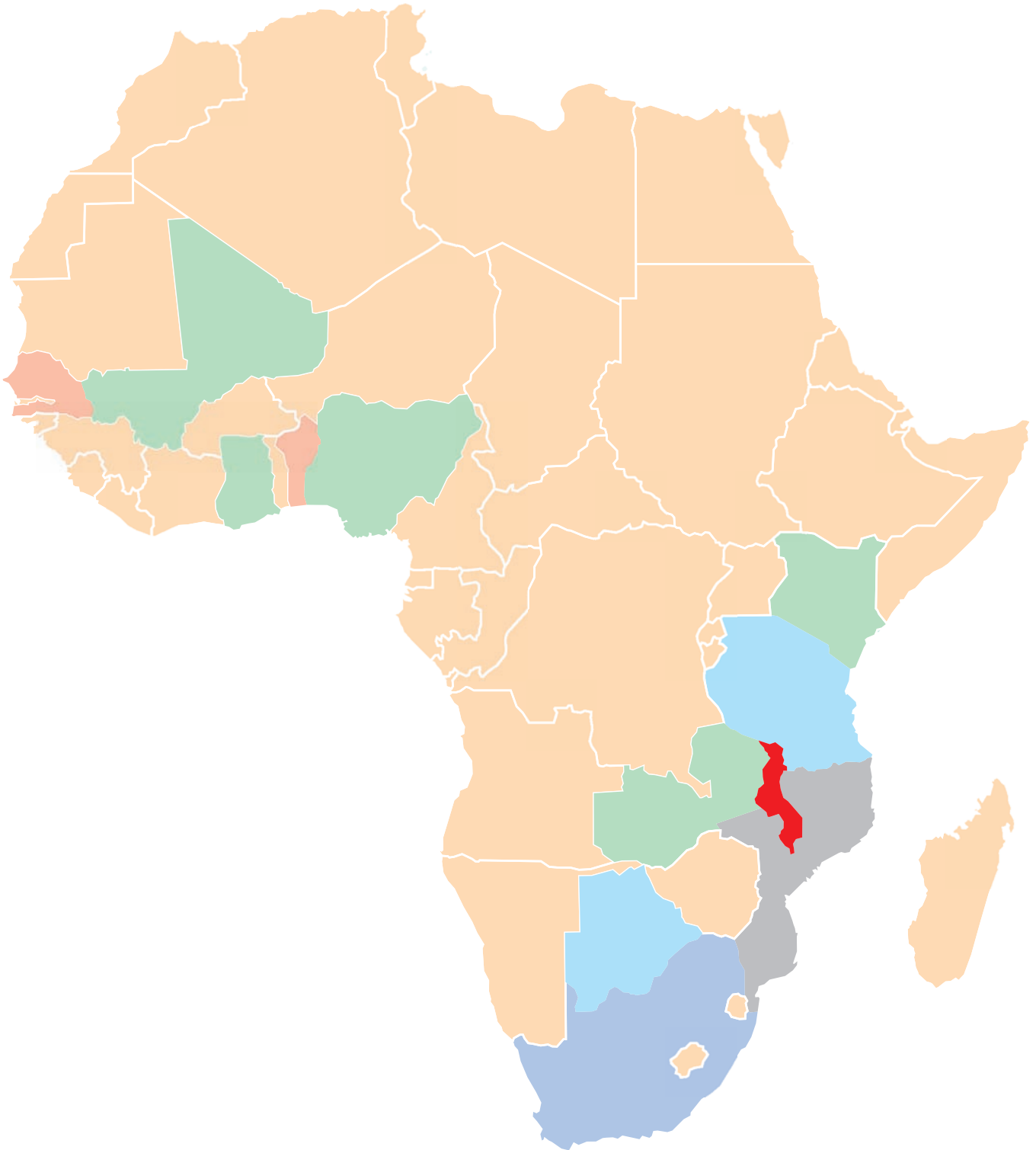
Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Honorable Members of the Legislature,

Thank you for joining me on this journey. Thank you for helping me in the progress we have made in rebuilding our institutions and renewing our nation. Thank you for your contribution in making us all proud to be Liberians.

Please join me in the first week in March 2009, when women leaders all over the world will join Liberian women in a colloquium co-chaired by Finland President Tarja Halonen and me to celebrate women’s empowerment. We will also recognize in presence President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda for their promotion of the role of women.

I thank you.

MALAWI



MALAWI



**Inaugural Speech by His Excellency
Dr. Bingu Wa Mutharika,
President of the Republic of Malawi
at Kamuzu Stadium —
“The Work of My Hands Speaks for Me”
Blantyre, Malawi
May 22, 2009**



INTRODUCTION

Five years ago, I stood at this podium to take the oath of office as President of the Republic of Malawi. Today, I am happy to once again stand before the people of Malawi to take the solemn oath of office as the head of state and government of the Republic of Malawi for the next five years.

First of all, I would like to extend a special welcome to Your Excellencies and distinguished guests who have travelled from various countries to witness this momentous occasion. I thank you all for coming to Malawi, and it is a great honour to have you here. Your presence is a source of inspiration to us and a demonstration of the confidence and trust that you have in our young democracy.

I welcome His Excellency Dr. Bakili Muluzi, Rt. Hon. Justin Malewezi, and Rt. Hon. Dr. Cassim Chilumpha.

Let me recognise in a special way all of the presidential candidates who took part in the race for the State House. I would like to personally commend you and your respective political parties for participating in the elections. I appeal to you to let us put our political differences behind us and open a new chapter of dialogue and reconciliation. Let us work together with a common sense of purpose for the good of our nation.

I would also like to pay special tribute to the chairperson of the electoral commission, all the commissioners, and staff of the electoral commission for the successful conduct of the elections.

I would like to commend the people of Malawi for the peaceful and orderly manner in which they conducted themselves throughout the

electoral process. The electoral process was, by any standard, smooth. All political parties participated in a free and fair political atmosphere without fear or intimidation.

The people of Malawi have spoken.

I am grateful to the religious leaders and all the people for their prayers.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to the people of Malawi for the trust and confidence that you have shown in my party and me by giving me another mandate to govern this country for the next five years. The work of my hands has spoken for me.

The elections were tough, but leaders and members of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) remained resilient and steadfast in their loyalty to me throughout the electoral process. I am grateful for the unwavering support of the people of Malawi and for a second opportunity to serve you as president. I accept this responsibility with a sense of humility and dedication. I am committed to serve the Malawi nation.

This is a momentous occasion. We have written a new and exciting chapter in the history of Malawi. The DPP has won an unprecedented landslide victory. It is a truly national party and not regionally based. We have a clear mandate to form a new government.

Our resounding victory is an expression of voter satisfaction with the way we have fulfilled our pledges and promises. We started with a vision of hope. I had made several pledges and commitments to fight poverty and take Malawi on the path to prosperity.

First, I had convinced the people of this country that Malawi is not a poor country. Rather, it was the people who are poor. On that basis, I pledged to fight poverty and that Malawi would attain a high rate of macroeconomic growth within a stable political and economic environment. I am happy to say that during the past four years, Malawi's economy grew at an average rate of 7.5 percent per annum, and in 2008, the economy grew at a rate of 9.7 percent.

Second, I promised the people of Malawi that our nation would produce enough food to feed ourselves. I said I would turn Malawi into a

"hunger-free" nation. We have achieved this, and Malawi has had huge food surpluses for the past four years. This year we have a super bumper harvest.

Third, I pledged to reduce the price of fertilizer to make it affordable to the poor farmers. My government has achieved this, and the majority of the poor have access to fertilizer and improved seeds.

Fourth, I promised to appoint women to high and responsible governance positions. I am happy to say that today there are more women in such positions than ever before. In fact, for the first time since our independence, forty-five years ago, we have a woman, Rt. Hon. Joyce Banda, as Vice President of our country.

Fifth, I promised to raise the status of traditional chiefs in our society. Today, many chiefs have been promoted and their salaries raised by up to 500 percent.

Sixth, I pledged to develop our youth, empower them, and make them responsible citizens. I am happy that many youths have been given positions of leadership and have a future of hope.

Seventh, I pledged to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic and to make facilities available for AIDS sufferers. Today, we have nearly 250,000 people receiving antiretroviral (ARV) drugs that not only prolong their lives, but also give them energy to become productive citizens.

Eighth, I pledged to improve the welfare of the elderly and people with disabilities. I created a specific ministry for the purpose, and today the elderly and the disabled have guaranteed social support.

Ninth, I promised to reform the public sector and improve the conditions of the civil service. Today, I am happy to report that over the past five years, civil servants have received a 300 percent salary increases. Civil servants now have a clear sense of direction; they are motivated and have benchmarks upon which to assess their performance.

In addition to these achievements, my government instituted Private Sector Reforms (PSR) aimed at developing business enterprises that

could contribute positively to the country's economic growth. We also strengthened Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) arrangements.

Your Excellencies;

Fellow Malawians:

The free and fair conduct of the May 19, 2009 election was a significant demonstration of our collective effort to nurture our democracy and our resolve to follow the path taken by most developed democracies around the world.

We have demonstrated that we, the people of Malawi, are able to embrace our democracy with zeal and determination. We have shown the need to work together to ensure that democracy matures and bears the desired fruits. As we strive to nurture our freedom, let us make democracy a beacon of hope and a symbol of our country's survival.

Your Excellencies;

Fellow Malawians;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

During the last five years, my administration achieved tremendous progress in the economic, political, and social transformation of our country. We have a proven track record of achievements. We have confounded even our worst critics.

We had implemented six "priorities within priorities" to propel our economy forward. These were agriculture and food security, irrigation and water development, transport and communications infrastructure, energy and power development, integrated rural development, and the management of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In the next five years, my government will continue with our development agenda. We shall be guided by the DPP Manifesto, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As the way forward, we shall implement the following priorities in order to consolidate the gains we have achieved so far.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

Agriculture is the mainstay of our economy. As such, in the last five years, my administration implemented agricultural reforms with the goal of attaining food security in the country. The core programme targeted agricultural input subsidies, providing cheap fertilizer, improved seeds, and insecticides.

This was prompted by the realization that Malawi is blessed with vast fertile lands, water reservoirs, and big rivers throughout the country. We realized that we needed to prioritize agriculture and food security because there was no basis at all for this country to experience hunger, let alone be poor. In short, increasing agricultural production was the centrepiece of my administration, and we left no stone unturned in our resolve to eradicate hunger in this country.

Malawi is now able to feed her people. I am happy to state that our efforts have begun to bear fruits. Malawi is now a model in the world in agriculture and food security. We have surpassed our domestic food consumption requirements to the extent that we are now able to export food.

In the next five years, my administration will continue to prioritise agriculture and food security. We will remain committed to ensuring that our current food production levels further increase to sustain the country's food self-sufficiency. We will also implement the Green Belt Initiative along Lake Malawi and major rivers throughout the country. We want to increase production of crops such as maize, millet, potatoes, beans, lentils, and sugarcane.

We will expand our farm inputs subsidy programme to cover modern tools and equipment for use in the rural areas. Furthermore, we will construct more modern food grain storage facilities throughout the country and explore more market opportunities for our farmers both within and outside the country. In short, we will continue to implement reforms in the agricultural sector in order to improve productivity.

INTEGRATED RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The main thrust of our Integrated Rural Development Programme is to end abject rural poverty by bringing development to the rural areas. During the past five years, my government recognised that broad-based economic growth and development cannot be achieved if rural areas are sidelined.

As a result, Malawians witnessed the establishment of Rural Growth Centres (RGC) at Neno, Nambuma, and Nthalire. Integrated Rural Development ensured the provision of various economic and social facilities such as banks, post offices, tarmac roads, piped water, and electricity.

I believe that the centres will spur development by encouraging investment and relocating people from cities to the centres. We also witnessed the establishment of rural factories for the processing of farm products under the One Village One Product (OVOP) project.

My government will continue its commitment to bringing development to the rural masses. We believe that the transformation of rural economies will help the country attain sustainable development. In the next five years, my administration will continue to give Integrated Rural Development priority.

In this regard, the financing programme under the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF), the Malawi Rural Development Fund (MARDEF), and the public works programme shall be strengthened to ensure that more rural people benefit from these facilities and improve their livelihoods. We will also strengthen the capacities of rural cooperatives and establish more factories in rural areas.

EDUCATION, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY

Your Excellencies;

My fellow Malawians:

We have recognized that education, science, and technology are the lynchpins of any national socioeconomic development. In the past five years, we took various measures aimed at reversing the

plummeting education standards that the country experienced between 1994 and 2004 that, in part, was caused by the hurried manner in which free primary school education was introduced in the country. This led to huge demand for infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, and teachers, but unfortunately, none of these were planned or budgeted.

In an attempt to improve the quality of education, my government implemented wide-ranging reforms in the education sector. Funding was increased by over 50 percent. We also embarked on a teachers' recruitment and upgrading drive to ensure that only qualified teachers taught in our schools. My administration also invested heavily in the construction of new school blocks, teachers' houses, and girls' hostels, as well as the rehabilitation of selected secondary schools to ensure that our children learn in a conducive environment.

The government also rehabilitated and increased subvention to the University of Malawi, Mzuzu University, and other institutions of higher learning.

My government also integrated science and technology into the national development planning process. To this end, we created an institutional framework that promoted science and technology in the country.

For the next five years, my administration will continue to invest heavily in the education sector. We will continue to construct more school blocks, girls' hostels, and teachers' houses throughout the country. We will also critically examine the sector, trying to identify challenges in the provision of quality education. This will include a comprehensive review of the curriculum of primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions to ensure that they are relevant to the development needs of our country.

I also wish to emphasize that science and technology will continue to be a top priority in the education sector. We will strengthen the capacity of research and science and technology institutions, and open the Lilongwe University of Science and Technology. In addition, we will revive free adult literacy programmes to reduce illiteracy levels among the adult population.

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND DEVELOPMENT

In the area of transport and infrastructure development, my government placed high priority on the development of transport, public works, and infrastructure. We focused on linking our rural areas with cities, towns, and other urban centres so as to enhance domestic and foreign trade.

In order to support my government's vision for development, the transport sector has undergone a massive transformation over the last five years. Many urban, rural, and feeder roads have been constructed, rehabilitated, and maintained. We also constructed and maintained bridges, airports, railways, and lake harbours.

A landmark project that is already underway is the construction of the Nsanje World Inland Port and the development of the Shire-Zambezi Waterway. Being a landlocked country, Malawi does not have access to cheap and direct transport services for our imports and exports. This project will open up the country to the sea, thereby reducing transportation costs.

I wish to reaffirm my commitment to this important project and want to assure you that my administration will, in the next five years, give this project the necessary support in order to make it a dream come true.

With regard to road infrastructure, we will construct a new and comprehensive network of rural access and trunk roads to serve the remote agricultural areas. We will also construct, upgrade, and rehabilitate urban roads and related infrastructures. In addition, my government will revamp the railway infrastructure to supplement the waterway project and other transportation networks.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE

The youth constitute a large percentage of our population. As such, I firmly believe in youth empowerment as one way of achieving national development. It is for this reason that during my last tenure in office, my administration focused on

vocational skills training for self-employment, as well as the provision of preventative health services and recreational facilities to enable youth to participate fully in the social, cultural, economic, and political development of the nation. We also provided them with tool kits and credit facilities to enable them to establish their own businesses.

My government will, in the next five years, continue to pay particular attention to skills building. We will create a National Youth Development Service (NYDS), establish new vocational and business training centres, and strengthen the existing technical centres in order to provide skills and vocational training to our youths. We will also provide soft loans through the MK2 Billion Youth Entrepreneurship Development Fund (YEDF) in order to reduce youth unemployment and, ultimately, empower them economically. In addition, we will equip all the training centres with the required tools. This, I believe, will create opportunities for a larger population of our youth to start their own businesses.

HEALTH AND HIV/AIDS

Public health and the fight against HIV/AIDS will continue to be a top priority. Over the last five years, my government paid special attention to health, as well as the prevention and management of communicable diseases. We have had an increase in the financing of the health sector, resulting in the rehabilitation and construction of health facilities across the country.

In the next five years, my administration will endeavour to increase the number of health maternity centres countrywide, ensuring that they are well equipped and adequately staffed. In addition, we will strive to provide favourable conditions of service for our health personnel in order to retain them and to attract new recruits into the system.

Regarding HIV and AIDS, our country has succeeded, with the assistance from the Global Fund, in curbing the spread of the epidemic through the provision of comprehensive care and treatment to the infected and affected, as well as

the rolling out of voluntary counselling and testing and the distribution of free antiretroviral drugs provided to nearly 250,000 people throughout the country. We will not slacken, but shall continue to be aggressive in our fight against the pandemic with the spirit and zeal that we started with in 2004.

IRRIGATION AND WATER DEVELOPMENT

With regard to irrigation and water development, I must say that God the Almighty has favoured Malawi with abundant fresh water resources and fertile land. But in the past, our country faced acute food shortages whenever the rains failed. I have now convinced the people of Malawi that by harnessing water from our lakes and rivers, we can promote irrigation farming to supplement the traditional rain-fed agriculture. Through this, we can make farming a year-round exercise and easily commercialise the agriculture sector.

In order to reduce overdependence on rain-fed agriculture, my government prioritised the irrigation and water development sector during the previous five years. We constructed and rehabilitated several dams throughout the country, established irrigation schemes, and distributed treadle and motorised pumps to many smallholder farmers. This initiative yielded great fruits, resulting in a food surplus. We shall also meet the MDG's target.

For this reason, in the next five years, my government will continue to give irrigation and water development top priority. Focus will be placed on the Green Belt Initiative, which will bring over one million hectares under new cultivation. This will enable Malawi to develop a vibrant agriculture sector that grows rice, maize, millet, cotton, beans, lentils, and a variety of other food and cash crops.

We will also intensify the construction of small and medium earth dams, as well as large multipurpose dams, all of which will have multiple benefits to the people. In addition, my government will intensify the development and provision of gravity-fed piped water to many

rural and urban communities for domestic use, because piped water is more reliable, hygienic, safe, and efficient.

ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

Your Excellencies;
Fellow Malawians;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me now turn to energy generation.

The country's social and economic development has, for a long time, been adversely affected by our inability to produce adequate and reliable energy. It is in recognition of this fact that my government decided to place this sector high on its development agenda during the previous five years.

Energy generation is a necessary prerequisite for economic development and industrialisation. Within the last five years, we rehabilitated our hydropower plants in order to improve their capacity and efficiency. We also introduced rural electrification programmes in order to make electricity available and accessible to many Malawians.

During the next five years, our government will ensure that energy generation continues to be among the top priorities. We will explore more avenues for the generation of energy from various sources. We will also invest in the sector and continue to address challenges that are currently impeding its development in order to generate sufficient energy for both domestic consumption and export. We will further enhance rural electrification projects to enable people in the rural areas to have access to electricity.

MINING INDUSTRY

With regard to the mining industry, Malawi is endowed with various mineral deposits that remain unexploited. These include uranium, which we now have started exploiting, gold, diamonds, bauxite, lime, and heavy mineral sands, just to mention a few.

My government will intensify policies to attract foreign investors to come to Malawi and

undertake mineral exploration and mining ventures. We will continue to devise policies that aim at promoting investment in this sector.

ZERO TOLERANCE ON CORRUPTION

I now wish to talk about corruption. Corruption is a menace in our society and remains a big challenge. In my inaugural speech on May 24, 2004, I declared “zero tolerance” on corruption. My stance remains unwavering. I shall continue to fight corruption because it is evil.

Corruption, in whatever form or shape, is an enemy to growth and prosperity because it robs the poor of their legitimate right to development. For this reason, the anti-corruption campaign will continue to intensify the fight against corruption by allocating more resources to the Anti-Corruption Bureau and law enforcement agencies.

We will also conduct civic education among the members of the general public, learning institutions, and the public and private sectors. We believe that these strategies will help to minimize incidences of corruption in the country.

Your Excellencies;
Fellow Malawians;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I wish to conclude my address by paying tribute to our cooperating partners for the material and financial support that they rendered towards the successful holding of the elections. With their support, we have managed to fulfil our constitutional requirement and this has helped us to move a step further in consolidating our democracy.

The cooperating partners include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDO), the European Union (EU), the British government through the Department for International Development, the United States government through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the government of Norway, the Irish government, and the government of Germany.

I wish also to recognise the important role that local stakeholders played during the electoral process. These include all political parties, the

media, religious leaders, business community, traditional leaders, civil society, non-governmental organisations, faith-based groups, public servants, the Malawi Police Service, and the Malawi Defence Force.

I also recognize the role of the media, the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), TV Malawi (TVM), and the Zodiak Broadcasting Station. I thank them for a job well done on the coverage of the elections.

I appreciate the various contributions towards the success of the elections and commend these services for a job well done.

I also acknowledge with appreciation the important role that electoral observers played during the election period. These include those from the Commonwealth, the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA). Their presence and determination has added credibility to the elections.

I reiterate that Malawi has great potential to achieve a faster rate of development and to get out of the poverty trap. The next five years will be exciting for Malawi as it will provide new opportunities for growth, new investments, and new hope for the Malawi nation.

To accomplish this, we need to cultivate a culture of patriotism, sacrifice, belief in ourselves, and willingness to serve our country. We also need to move in one direction as a nation. Through this, we will be able to collectively address the challenges besetting our country and move from poverty to prosperity.

Finally, let me assure the Malawi nation that I will be a president for all the people of our country regardless of their political affiliation, colour, race, or creed. I pledge my commitment to work with the opposition and all selfless Malawians who have the interest of this nation at heart. I believe that through unity of purpose we can jointly turn this country into a prosperous nation of achievers.

I pledge to heal the wounds and bruises that were caused during the election period and unite the country.

We shall put in place an administration that will foster unity and love, engender prosperity, and harmonise coexistence. There will be no vengeance or retribution. We shall work in harmony to promote the socioeconomic well-being of our nation.

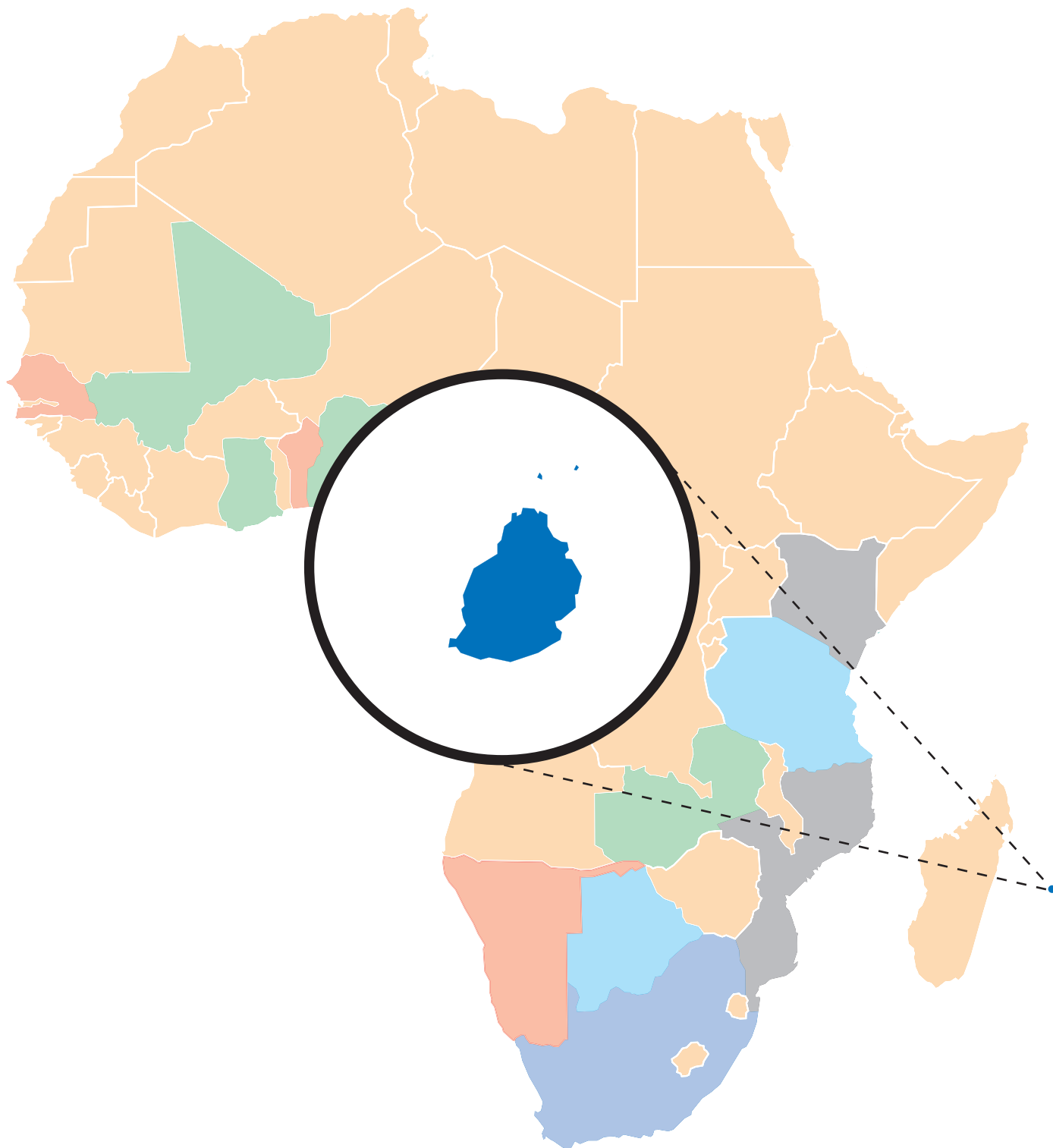
We should always remember that we are, first and foremost, Malawians, and we need to put the destiny of this country into our own hands.

We look to the future with new hopes and expectations. We look to the future with new patriotism and dedication. We look to the future with a sense of accomplishment.

I personally believe in my country and in my people. I am confident that God will help us deliver on our promises and develop this country.

May the Almighty God bless you all.

MAURITIUS



MAURITIUS



**His Excellency Dr. Navinchandra
Ramgoolam, Prime Minister of the
Republic of Mauritius**

August 14, 2009

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Mauritius, like others, has to deal with the worst global economic crisis since the 1930's. However, the impact of the recession has been particularly severe on countries with export-driven economies, like Mauritius, as the volume of world trade is expected to decline further. There is a real danger of a return to overt protectionism by some major importing countries, a significant mothballing of foreign direct investment (FDI), and substantial decline in world tourism.

Since early 2008, anticipating a spillover of the financial meltdown on the global real economy, Mauritius has been preparing to meet these daunting challenges. We started by earmarking a substantial amount of resources for national infrastructural projects as well as the "Maurice Ile Durable" project – a sustainable economic development project that encourages less reliance on fossil fuel, the pursuit of food security on a regional basis, human resources development, and eradication of absolute poverty. This was made possible by the greater fiscal space generated by the reforms we have been implementing since 2005.

In June 2008, to stimulate demand further, we applied pro-cyclical expansionary policies when the economy was on a high growth path, while major countries around the world were implementing contractionary policies. We were ahead of the curve. In October 2008, Mauritius responded to the World Bank's and G-20's calls for targeted, temporary, flexible, and concerted Keynesian policies with an additional stimulus package. This package was equivalent to 3.8 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and aimed at unlocking growth of around 1.5 percent

annually. We continued on that same path in this year's budget, which was presented in May, with an 18-month action plan to ride out the global crisis. Our aim is to save jobs, protect people, and prepare for the recovery.

To achieve these three goals, we are focusing on supporting those vulnerable industries and enterprises that are struggling, but can still be viable when the global economy recovers. We are now also investing in the infrastructure of tomorrow, by front-loading and fast tracking, as much as possible, a ten-year public sector investment programme.

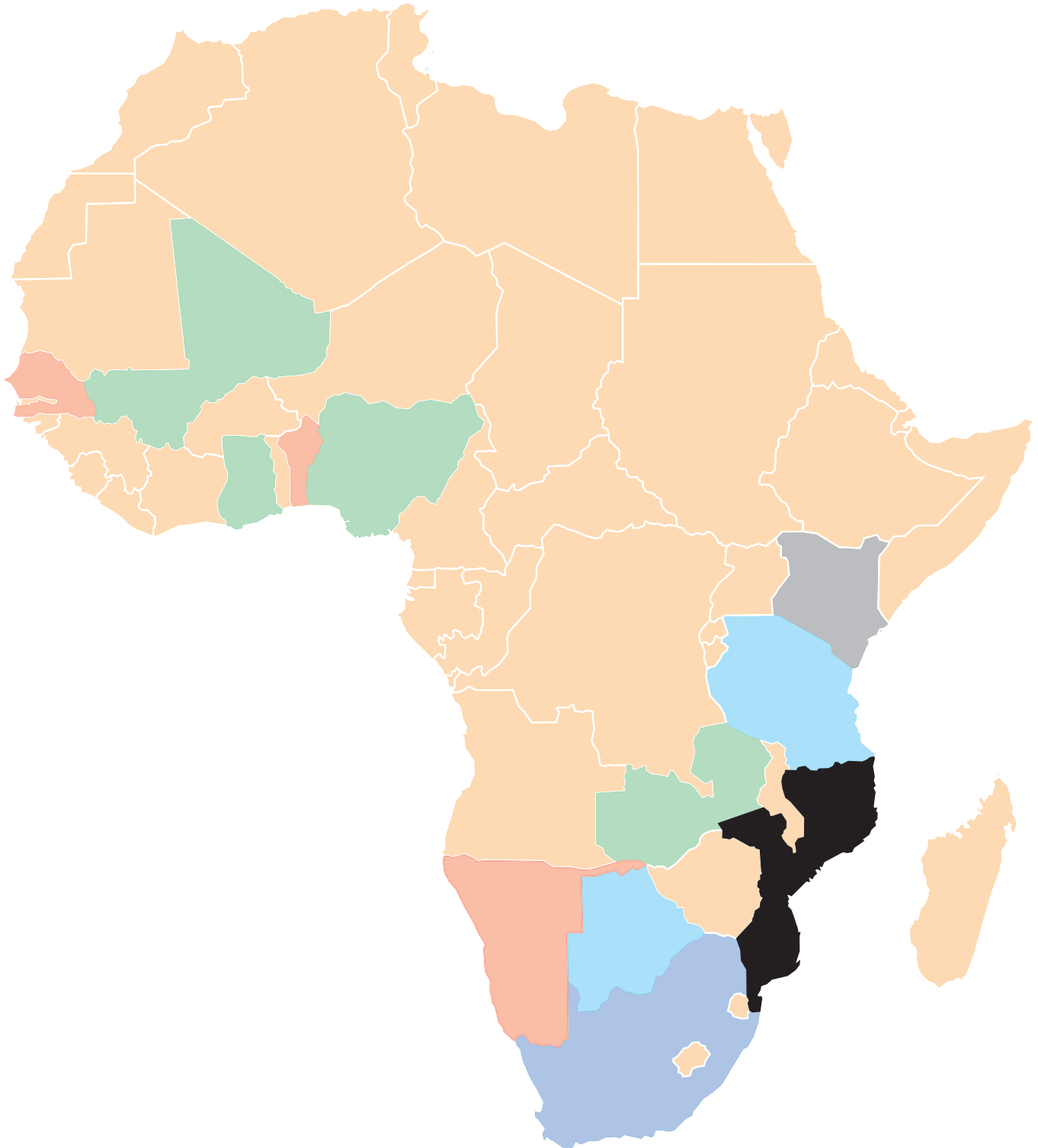
Our stimulus package—which has an expected growth rate of 2.5 percent this year—has achieved its aims, saving thousands of jobs and preventing thousands of families from drifting into poverty, while most countries are in a recession.

Looking beyond the global recession, we are confident that the economy will return to higher growth, the unemployment rate will resume its downward trend, and FDI will pick up again.

We will continue to pursue our vision of an *Attractive, Modern, Inclusive, Green, and Open* (AMIGO) *Mauritius*. Our long-term objective of attracting two million tourists within the next ten years is on target. And so is our goal of diversifying our four-pillar economy to one based on eight pillars: sugar cane, tourism, textiles and clothing, financial services, information and communication technologies (ICT), seafood, integrated resorts, and health and education centers of excellence.

All of these underpin our confidence that Mauritius will be able to safely ride out the global crisis and that we will be able to achieve an even higher GDP than before.

MOZAMBIQUE



MOZAMBIQUE



His Excellency

Armando Emílio Guebuza,

President of the Republic

of Mozambique, on the General

State of the Nation

June 22, 2009



It is most appropriate that this speech to the nation, the last in a series of speeches, be given during this year's celebration, which is dedicated to the memory of Eduardo Mondlane, "Architect of our National Unity." In 1962 he envisioned, with his excellent wisdom, an independent nation of Mozambique, free from colonialism and poverty. For us, his ideas have, do, and will always provide an endless source of inspiration in the construction of our beloved country.

It is with renewed emotion that we address Your Excellencies, Deputies, and the wonderful Mozambican people, for it is through you that we present the report on the general state of the nation in accordance with the provisions of line "B" of Article 159 of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique.

For us, the presentation of this report constitutes a privileged moment in which to inform the country of the life of the nation at various levels, particularly with regard to the continuing improvements to the quality of life in our beautiful Mozambique and the opportunities that have been created for individual, family, and collective achievement.

As we have governed the nation for more than four years, we are pleased to report that this sublime and noble form of communication with the Mozambican nation has provided us with rewarding and unforgettable lessons in the strengthening of our multiparty democracy, in achieving national unity, and in the promotion of a culture of peace. For this reason, we wish to congratulate the Mozambican people—from the Rovuma to Maputo and from the eastern border to Zumbo—for their resolve and dedication to the development of the country, and above all, for their

inestimable contribution to the maintenance of our peaceful climate. We congratulate, particularly:

- our Parliament, for its contribution in the form of noble legislative action, which was decisive in accelerating the progress we have achieved in the fight against poverty;
- our esteemed deputies, for the laudable work they carried out in the electoral districts, on the boards, in the working committees, and in session; and
- the political parties, both with and without representation in Parliament, which in the exercise of their freedom of expression, have made their contribution to the:
 - consolidation of our national unity;
 - construction of our democratic legal state;
 - strengthening of our multiparty democracy;
 - promotion of a culture of peace;
 - enrichment of the pluralist debate with regard to national issues and the search for solutions for our major challenges; and
 - promotion of the values of national identity, self-esteem, and patriotism.
- our combatants in the “Fight for National Liberation” who, once more inspired by the ideals of Eduardo Mondlane, have made their contribution and transmitted their experiences to the new generations so that the fight against poverty may result in a more prosperous, united, and cohesive Mozambique;
- the security and defense forces for their maintenance of law, order, and public peace and for their defense of our sovereignty;
- our farmers, workers, and businesspeople, in their various activities, for the hard work and dedication they have contributed to the creation of wealth and well-being in the Mozambican family;
- to the institutions of the state and their respective workers, particularly the teachers at all educational levels and the health personnel, especially the doctors, nurses, and health technicians, who even with the many difficulties they face, have not abdicated their role of serving society;
- our district administrators, our commanders in the “Fight Against Poverty” in the districts, for the effort, dedication and creativity they have demonstrated, and for their ability to lead the people;
- the women and young people of Mozambique, for the leadership they have shown in the efforts of the Mozambican people toward achieving our various national objectives, thus constituting the highest level of support and dedication to our fight against poverty;
- the institutions of civil society, our partners in the promotion of social and economic development;
- the religious leaders and communities, for their contribution to civic education, and to the promotion of a culture of peace, dialogue, and social well-being;
- the private institutions, which, through socially responsible actions, have contributed to the promotion of, among many things, education, health, sports, and culture, as well as to the mitigation of the effects of natural disasters;
- the means of social communications and their professionals, for their assiduous, critical, and creative distribution of national and international information, as well as the education of society and their role in the creation of a sense of patriotism and citizenship;
- to our disabled compatriots, who even with the difficulties they still face have engaged themselves in a proactive manner, in light of our national objectives, in the search of solutions not only for their situation, but also for change in the attitudes and behavior of society;
- the professionals of culture, particularly of music, dance, theater, film, literature, photography, humor, and other cultural and artistic expressions, who in their selfless manner and constant presence have contributed to the valorization and preservation of our historic and cultural patrimony;
- the community leaders for their contribution to the organization, mobilization, and

team-building of the communities in our fight against poverty; and

- our partners in development for their valuable and continuing support for the institutions of the state and the Mozambican people.

We are guided, Your Excellencies, as always, by the noble and practical ideal of national unity. This has enabled us to motivate, engage, organize, and delegate responsibility to Mozambicans from all social levels and groups—from diverse origins, beliefs, and political affiliations—to work for the development of this nation of heroes. We are also guided by the self-esteem that, once again, awakened our pride in being Mozambican, which fuels the valorization of what is ours, and the strength to fight for our own, our families', and nation's well-being.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Mozambican nation was created from:

- the actions of its dearest sons, who strove to improve our lives;
- places with special historical meaning; and
- demonstrations of unity on the national and international level.

In this context, several events serve as a basis for the consolidation of the nation. Among the most significant, we promote a vast program for the celebration of our heroes and historic places, with particular emphasis on:

- the dedication of the year 2009 to Eduardo Mondlane, the “Architect of National Unity” and a legendary figure in our struggle for liberation;
- the celebration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the birth of Samora Moisés Machel, who proclaimed our National Independence and became the first president of the Republic; and
- the celebration of the Fortieth Anniversary of the deaths of other outstanding young people of the Generation of the 25th of

September, namely Filipe Samuel Magaia, Tomás Nduda, John Issa, Mateus Sansão Muthemba, José Macamo, and Paulo Samuel Kankhomba, who gave their lives for our liberation.

We are filled with special pride by the proclamation as Cultural Patrimony of:

- Matchedje, in Niassa, the village that hosted the Second Congress of the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO), on the occasion of the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the realization of this historic event;
- the village of Nwadjahane, in Gaza, home of President Eduardo Mondlane; and
- Chilembene, in Gaza, birthplace of President Samora Machel.

We also celebrate the proclamation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), at the suggestion of our government, of the Nyau and Timbila as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. These outstanding moments in the life of the nation contributed to the reinforcement of national unity. National festivals of school sports and culture represented the cooperation among Mozambicans of different ethnic, cultural, racial, religious, and social origins.

The Second National Conference on Culture was the culmination of reflection and debate that began in the districts and continued in the provinces regarding the role and place of culture in the social and economic development of the Mozambican nation. The knowledge that resulted from this event will provide a valuable contribution to the process of planning the integrated development of our Mozambique.

Another moment of national pride was the celebration throughout the country of the “Call to Unity,” a symbol of our cohesion, on the Thirtieth Anniversary of our National Independence. The procession of the torch alongside the national flag created moments of jubilation among the people, with spontaneous

celebrations and demonstrations of patriotism and a sense of belonging to the nation.

The medals won by our athletes in men's and women's basketball, track and field, tennis, ice hockey, volleyball, and Tang Soo Do created moments of great happiness. These celebrations, homages, and demonstrations have the power to ensure the preservation of the history of the Mozambican people, recording in our most precious annals the heroism and talent of Mozambicans and keeping the "Call to National Unity" alive. They contribute, in a large part, to the resistance of efforts to distort our history and to underestimate the strength, creativity, and abilities of the Mozambicans in the reconquest of our national identity.

Esteemed Deputies,

The consolidation of our democratic legal state is a priority for our program of governance. This explains our efforts in the creation of a public administration that promotes development through its greater efficiency and effectiveness, and in the adherence of the officials and agents of the state to ethical norms and a sense of duty and obligation, as their job is to better serve the citizenry and institutions of the country. This also illustrates our efforts to combat bureaucracy, inaction, and corruption by strengthening the local agencies.

In the pursuit of these objectives, we have promoted reforms in the public sector, particularly through:

- deconcentration and decentralization;
- implementation of the strategy and plan to fight corruption;
- professionalization of public officials; and
- strategic development of the state's human resources, and their motivation by means of the implementation of a midterm salary policy.

One of the results of decentralization was the increase in the number of independent districts from thirty-three to forty-three. This process will extend and consolidate the basis for greater

involvement of the citizenry in the search for solutions to their problems. As a result of the implementation of these reforms, the change in attitude among public officials in the country has been dramatic—from redistribution to integrated services such as those offered through the individual service centers. At the same time, we achieved greater speed in the performance of official tasks, particularly with regards to licensing the exercise of economic activity.

As part of the consolidation of our "Democratic Legal State", we have paid particular attention to the system for the administration of justice, because it is one of democracy's fundamental pillars. Thus we defend greater speed and transparency in the system as it moves closer to the level of the individual citizen. The approval of legislation for the improved functioning of the system for the administration of justice, the society, and the economy, as well as the implementation of a program for material and procedural reform in the legislature, have served to secure the adaptation of the dynamic of development to the requirements of the legal state that we are consolidating on a daily basis.

The fight against crime has always been a subject of close attention. We have worked to involve the communities in our actions, particularly through community policing, in order to achieve greater success on this front. The formation, training, and professionalization of units in this system and their placement at various levels, with priority to the districts, also has the goal of enabling the state in the fight against crime. This formation, while attending to the specific needs of each institution of the system, is intended to guarantee respect for human rights, particularly respect for human life, in strict observance of the ethical norms and sense of duty and obligation, which guide the actions of the professionals of the system for the administration of justice. It is this respect for life and the observance of these norms that will ensure that our prisons do not take any human life as a result of professional negligence.

Still within the context of respect for human life, we reaffirm that only the courts have the power to judge and impose punishment based on

the current laws of our country. For this reason, we discourage and condemn taking any actions that seek to take justice into the hands of the individual. We have taken measures that resulted in improved performance, on the one hand, and in their improved coordination, on the other, of each of the institutions that make up the system. These actions are complemented by the construction of courthouses, the institutionalization of alternative forms of dispute resolution, and the expansion of legal assistance services to the citizens.

In spite of the difficulties, the path we have taken motivates us to continue, with confidence, to work for a Mozambique that is ever more just and prosperous. The respect for the rights and freedoms of the citizens, an essential characteristic of a “Democratic Legal State”, is promoted and cultivated in each citizen and, above all, in each agent and official of the state.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The open and inclusive presidency demonstrated an appropriate and motivating methodology of direct contact with our people, with the institutions, and with the different segments of society, to learn about the development of community issues and about the decision-making process, and to share our experiences in the fight against poverty. In this interaction with our wonderful people, we opened our government to evaluation by the people, and from this dialogue, there resulted a collective appropriation of our achievements and the sharing of challenges and perspectives.

In addition to this, our country voluntarily submitted to evaluation by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a decision that resulted in our commitment to involve our society in the identification and discussion of issues of national interest, which has permitted proposals for solutions where weaknesses were revealed. This mechanism complements other internal initiatives in the form of forums for consultation and review, such as the Observatory for Development, the Consulting Commission on Labor, and the annual meetings with the Confederation of Economic Associations.

We began our government, ladies and gentlemen, by giving greater expression and leadership to the districts as centers for development and bases for the social and economic planning of our country. In this context, the Fund for Investment in Local Initiatives was allocated with MTn seven million in resources directed toward the production of more food crops and the creation of more jobs to generate income for families. With the MTn seven million, we initiated a change in the development paradigm, that is, one in which the beneficiary came to take a leadership role in the process. By rescuing and consolidating self-esteem, we instilled greater confidence in the creation of local capacities, particularly in the exploration of available natural resources, some of which had been underutilized.

At the center of this process of change is the Consulting Council, one of the mechanisms for the participation of the population in government. The involvement of the community and the influence of civil society in the identification of the priorities for local development thus gained a new impetus. A fundamental achievement reached was the utilization of this mechanism by communities in the lending of funds by the directors, thus contributing to more transparency in efforts for the good of the people.

Life in the districts found a new dynamic as a result of the decentralization of planning and development of human resources. In effect, the decisions regarding promotions and advancement and the recruiting of technicians are already made at the district level. In addition to the seven million, the districts came to benefit from the working budgets, investments, and other decentralized funds, particularly for the construction of schools, the maintenance of roads, and the digging of wells for drinking water. From this resulted:

- the emergence of small local businesses in the areas of agricultural processing, clothing manufacturing, and metalworking and construction materials, increasing the level of business activity and the value of local workers and their talents;

- the start of the provision of more services at the district level;
- the increase in production, productivity, and amount of land under cultivation;
- the introduction, in some districts, of the practice of gardening and the breeding of fish, birds, and bees, among other things, contributing to both food and nutritional security;
- the introduction and renewal of the production of certain crops and productive technologies; and
- the increase in the cash flow in circulation in the districts and the value of our national currency.

Still within the scope of our activities in the districts, we ensured that more citizens have access to drinking water. It was as a result of this development that we increased the level of coverage from 40 percent in 2004 to 52 percent in 2008. This produced a reduction in the distances needed to travel and the incidences of diarrheal illnesses in the covered areas, resulting in great advances in the promotion of public health.

Notwithstanding the positive results achieved, the *Seven Million Initiative* still presents us with challenges, particularly in the training of all of the people involved in the conception, approval, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the projects. At the same time, it is important that we continue our efforts for the training of local businesspeople so that midterm projects can be completed and financed by the other decentralized funds, and it is our obligation to ensure that these funds, including the MTn seven million, circulate and have a growing social and economic impact at the district level.

Esteemed Deputies,

We have been implementing our policies for the continued improvement of the living conditions of our people at a time when we have had to deal with numerous adversities. One of these that has greatly affected our economy was the oil crisis, which was the cause of a continuous and persistent rise in the price of fuel. To illustrate,

the average price of a barrel went from \$50 in 2004 to \$90 in 2008, reaching a maximum price of \$140 in the same year. As Mozambique is an importer of fuels, this crisis caused a reduction in the volume of imports and a resulting rise in the cost of fuel, with effects on the economic and social life of the country.

Another adversity with a negative impact on the life of our people was the rapid rise in the price of grains, in which, for example, the price of rice went from \$115 per ton in 2007 to \$720 in 2008. Both of these issues profoundly affected the daily life of each of us and disturbed public order and peace, resulting in material damages and injury to many families and sectors of activity.

In addition to the adversities I have mentioned, we have also dealt with others, such as the following:

- cyclical natural disasters such as drought, floods, and cyclones, which were intensified by global climactic changes, causing the loss of human lives, homes, cultural centers, and public and private infrastructures;
- uncontrolled fires of various proportions that occurred in several parts of our national territory and resulted in human and material damages;
- the explosions of armaments in Mahlazine, which caused sorrow and pain, and destroyed property in the cities of Maputo and Matola;
- the acts of xenophobia in South Africa which resulted in the deaths of some of our compatriots and in the loss of their property; and
- the current international financial crisis, whose full consequences are still unforeseeable, although its impact is already being felt in different sectors of activity and in families, demanding that we all face it with serenity and an attitude of contention and coordination of actions in the search for alternatives.

Even in these adverse circumstances, however, with the participation of our wonderful people

and the support of the international community, we implemented coordinated measures across several sectors that resulted in the mitigation of these disturbances and crises. Thus, we ensured our cohesion and the maintenance of a favorable environment in which to continue to pursue, as a people, the great mission of building a prosperous nation.

The operationalization of the district as a center for development will happen through greater investment in education and health. In this area, we have expanded the school system at all levels, with a focus on basic, technical professional, and public and private higher education, as well as the training of instructors.

The total number of schools for general studies throughout the country grew significantly, having gone from 10,000 in 2004 to nearly 12,000 in 2008. This growth was reflected in the increase in the number of enrollments, from four million students in 2004 to about five million in 2008. Our commitment to education has translated into an increase in the number of public and private institutions of technical professional and higher education in all of the provinces, some of which were founded in the districts, and in a new dynamic of graduations. Of particular importance in this expansion is the greater emphasis on the training of professionals in the education, health, and agriculture sectors.

There are, at the present moment, seventy-four schools of technical professional education in the country, offering a range of courses, including those with a practical and immediate use in our communities. This enabled the graduation of nearly 7,000 professionals in 2008, compared to nearly 4,500 in 2004.

We can celebrate the fact that we have increased the number of institutions of higher education from seventeen in 2004 to thirty-eight at present. From nearly 2,800 graduates, we increased that number to more than 10,500. Today, the Mozambican nation has more than 60,000 university students.

Society also witnessed the expansion of activities in:

- university extension and research; and
- distance learning, making use of the information and communication technologies now accessible in all of the provincial capitals and a growing number of the districts through the Multimedia Community Centers and Telecommunications Centers.

In effect, today we proudly note that more Mozambicans are attending primary, secondary, technical professional, and higher education schools in response to our commitment to education in a way that is competitive at a national, regional, and international level, and recognizes the economic potential of the different provinces of our country.

We are pleased to recognize the way our university students enthusiastically and spontaneously organized a return to the “District Fairs” movement in accordance with the existing dynamic of life in the districts. With this initiative, the students:

- interacted with other young people, local officials, and the population, sharing experiences;
- supported the district governments in their planning activities; and
- searched for employment opportunities.

As a result of this process, some of these young people are already working in productive activities at the district level, fulfilling the need for the recruitment of technicians in the districts. In reality, the presence of technicians with advanced training in various fields is quite visible in the districts.

Along with the expansion of education, we have been taking measures directed at the improvement of its quality at all levels, among which are notable:

- the improved distribution of free school books;
- the reform of the sub-system of teacher training;

- the elimination of the practice of hiring new teachers without professional training;
- the creation of a national system of accreditation, evaluation, and guarantee of quality and of its implementing agency;
- the implementation of the Training Strategy for Instructors in Higher Education;
- the relaunching of university extension programs; and
- the beginning of operations of the National Council for the Evaluation of Quality in Higher Education.

The many achievements reached in the area of sports have demonstrated the value of our interventions:

- in the reorganization of the sports federations and associations;
- in the development of sports infrastructures;
- in the allocation of financial resources;
- in the regular attendance of sporting events; and
- in the continuous dialogue with our athletes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The training of more health professionals, the expansion of the health system, and the increase in the quality of health services have also had a strong impact in the districts. In this way, more doctors and other health professionals were added. In terms of coverage we went from 62 districts having at least one doctor in 2004 to 115 at the present.

This notable presence of health professionals in the districts, together with the construction, rehabilitation, and equipment of health centers, and the supplying of ambulances to all of the districts, have improved access to and the quality of health services for many Mozambicans.

For the first time in the last 20 years, the number of cases of malaria and of fatalities due to this illness has shown a steady reduction. This result was achieved through residential spraying, with the collaboration of the population, and improvements in diagnosis and treatment.

This success is illustrated by the fact that, at the national level, cases of malaria were reduced by nearly 24 percent and fatalities by nearly 35 percent as of 2007.

The results of the campaign for a healthy environment and the promotion of individual and collective hygiene have contributed to making these achievements irreversible, and to combating cholera and other diarrheal illnesses.

The presidential initiatives in the fight against HIV and AIDS and the improved health of mothers and children have sought to raise awareness among the Mozambicans, across different social groups, as much about the effects of HIV and AIDS as the importance of the health of mothers and children in the family, in society, and in the economy. It was agreed in our meetings that these areas constitute a public health problem and that we must act quickly to reduce the socio-economic impact in both an individual and collective manner.

These initiatives were duplicated in the provinces and districts, and have had an impact on the measures for prevention, treatment, and mitigation of the effects of HIV/AIDS, and on the increase in the number of hospital births from 48 percent in 2005 to 55 percent in 2008.

In this way, we expanded the availability of antiretroviral treatment from 19 districts in 2004 to all 128 districts of the country, which allows us to provide this treatment en masse for the benefit of our infected compatriots, whose numbers have increased from nearly 6,000 in 2004 to nearly 135,000 in 2008.

We have the individual, collective, and institutional responsibility to change the trend toward rapid increase in the number of infections with HIV/AIDS by implementing our Strategy for the Acceleration of the Prevention of Infection with HIV. Our goal is to ensure that HIV/AIDS does not destroy:

- the family;
- the family environment for the education of our children; and
- our achievements in the training of our citizens, above all in our public services and

in the business sector, following our priorities for development.

With regard to the health of mothers, newborns, and children, our goal is the continuing and irreversible reduction in the incidence of deaths among children and mothers, and the guarantee of an appropriate, healthy environment for our society, particularly in rural areas. For this reason, it is important to continue our investments both in the training of personnel and in the improvement of services.

As we had the opportunity to inform this Great House in December of last year, we can report that leprosy has ceased to constitute a public health problem in our beloved country.

Our commitment to the cause of gender equality led us to take measures to reinforce the value of women in social, economic, and political spheres to ensure that the family is strengthened as an institution. It acts as the transmitter of values and the center of creation of the human personality. In effect, the different measures taken translated into, for example:

- the enrollment of more girls in school and greater completion rates at different levels of school and academic training;
- the adoption of a national plan against violence toward women; and
- the promotion of the participation of women in the economic and political spheres.

As a result of these measures, we have seen, on the one hand, a greater awareness in society with regard to the rights of women, and larger numbers of young women who finish various levels of education, particularly technical professional and higher education. On the other hand, the representation of women in government, public administration, and the business sector is more visible.

We have also ensured that in Mozambican society there are programs for the protection of children, the disabled, and the aged. In this area, programs for social assistance and acts of solidarity

from one Mozambican to another have expanded and demonstrated their importance to social integration and the reduction of poverty among our compatriots.

These acts of solidarity are complemented by the growing number of public services available so that our elderly, orphaned, and disabled with visual, auditory, physio-motor, mental, and speech problems, as well as other vulnerable groups, can increase their self-esteem.

We have been engaged in the search for sustainable and durable solutions for the unique problems of war veterans, within the sphere of the General Peace Accord. In this process, we rely on the involvement and participation of the various associations which represent these members of our society.

Social cooperation promotes and deepens our three-way dialogue, reinforcing the partnership among the government, employers, and workers. Through this cooperation, the partners discuss the development of the economy and contribute their opinions, which are always valuable, and are able to create consensus on such issues as the establishment of a minimum wage for different areas of activity.

As a result of our commitment to the valorization and protection of the worker, we have achieved:

- an increase in the speed of pension payments using banking services;
- the creation of social security services for other categories of workers;
- the restoration of legality in various employment institutions, which contributed to greater respect for the rights of workers and security standards in the workplace; and
- the acceleration of funeral subsidy payments.

Through the Strategy for Employment and Professional Training, we have promoted employment for thousands of our compatriots and initiatives for professional training and self-employment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The restoration of the Hydroelectric Plant at Cahora Bassa (HCB) to the control of the state created opportunities in the energy sector for a greater dynamization of the economy of the country and an acceleration of the process of bringing electricity to the districts.

The expansion of the National Network for Energy Transport was the driving force of our electrification program. With this expansion, 32 district seats were connected in Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Nampula, Zambézia, Tete, Manica, Sofala, Inhambane, and Gaza, and the number of energy consumers has increased from nearly 284,000 in 2004, to nearly 615,000 in 2008.

With the connection of Pemba and Lichinga to the National Network for Energy Transport, all of the provincial capitals have now been connected to the network.

In addition, we have provided electricity through isolated systems such as solar panels and diesel generators to more administrative posts and localities.

With the supply of energy through these systems, an environment for the emergence of new small businesses was created, which permitted the people to make use of not only the energy itself, but also the communications systems such as radios and cellular telephones. Health clinics also began to have better conditions for the preservation of vaccines.

Still in the energy sector, the construction of fuel pumps has increased the number of operators selling fuel in rural areas, facilitating its acquisition by the people there.

Our goal, esteemed deputies, is to electrify the entire country. Our priority, now, is to connect all of the district seats to the National Network for Energy Transport, and from there, to expand to all of the administrative posts and localities.

We continue to expand our exploration of the energy potential we possess, developing programs that seek to explore more sources of energy, particularly new and renewable energies, and link them to the infrastructure for energy transport.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Within the context of integrated rural development, our commitment is to ensure the rational and sustainable development of our water, plant, animal, and mineral resources while respecting biodiversity and protecting our ecosystems.

Agriculture in the districts should guarantee the food and nutritional security of our people. Our intervention in this sector allowed us to create a capacity for the local production of seeds for basic food crops such as corn, millet, rice, beans, and peanuts.

In our first programs within the context of the Green Revolution, put into operation by the Action Plan for Food Production, the districts took on specific responsibilities in the production of certain crops. Still within the scope of this plan, it was possible to:

- restore operation of family and small-scale producers;
- increase extension services; and
- increase our production of cereals and legumes.

For the production of cereals, we primarily focused on the cultivation of rice and wheat. In effect, we restored the large scale production of rice in Chókwe, Gaza, and Nante in Zambézia. The production of rice at the national level increased from 174,000 tons during the 2004-2005 season to 200,006 tons during the 2007-2008 season.

In comparison, the global production of cereals increased from 1.9 million tons during the 2004-2005 season to 2.3 million tons during the 2007-2008 season.

After three decades, esteemed Deputies, Mozambique has returned to the production of wheat with the enthusiastic support of our producers. The areas where this crop grows can be seen in the Districts of Lago, Sanga, Muembe, and Lichinga in Niassa, Sussundenga and Bárue in Manica, Xai-Xai and Chókwe in Gaza, and Manhiça in Maputo. In Tsangano, Tete, the production of this cereal was increased as part of the Action Plan for Food Production and to fulfill

the responsibilities of the district for the production of wheat.

As we have seen, the restoration of the production of rice brought opportunities for the continued growth of our business activities, as the provision of supplies and equipment associated with rice cultivation created opportunities for private investment. This challenge also exists in relation to the cultivation of wheat.

In the debate regarding cash crops such as sugarcane, tobacco, cashew nuts, and jatropa, we maintain that they have a large contribution to make to the development of the country. Nevertheless, they should not supplant the production of food crops.

With regard to cattle raising, as a result of our multiple interventions, we saw an increase in the total stock of cattle from 1.2 million head in 2004 to more than 1.6 million head at present. The number of family producers increased from 177,000 in 2005 to 354,000 families today. This increase meant not only more beef cattle but also more for milk production and use as draft animals.

For the continued success of our agricultural programs, we continue to pay particular attention to the access, use, and profit potential of water in this sector as well as the value chain, with particular emphasis on production, processing, storage, commercialization, and consumption.

The business sector is an important partner of the government in the operationalization of the districts as centers for development. Our commitment has translated into the creation of a favorable environment for the development of businesses, through, for example, support for the recovery of the operational capacity of the commercial sector so that it may fulfill its role in the value chain of the productive sector. In this way, the decentralized funds for direct management by the districts have contributed to the revitalization and intensification of commercial and business activity in those areas.

Thus, it is becoming possible to bring informal operators into the formal sector through the simplification of commercial licensing and the introduction of a simplified tax plan for small

contributors, which has brought our compatriots into the national tax system.

The expansion of the potential for tourism in our country, together with:

- the growing improvement of tourism and related services;
- the revitalization of the exploration of the parks;
- the training of human resources; and
- investments in tourism infrastructures, will turn this “Pearl of the East” into a favored tourist destination.

In this way, tourist activity, in its various modalities, has been contributing to the dynamization of social and economic activity in the districts.

We have been taking measures, ladies and gentlemen, within the context of the conflict between humans and wildlife, to guarantee the protection of the population and its food security, as for us, humans are at the epicenter of development. We have also been promoting the protection of biodiversity, in order to ensure ecological balance and the income that derives from its sustainable use by the communities.

The initiatives for the support of entrepreneurial activity in the tourism sector have been reflected in the heightened interest among more Mozambicans in the development of tourist activity and related businesses.

The investments in the sector of our mineral resources have had an impact on the national economy, as they have promoted employment for thousands of Mozambicans and created many business opportunities on a small and medium scale in the districts in which they have been implemented.

These investments have stimulated, for example in Moatize, Tete, an increase in the demand for housing, restaurants, hotels, transportation, and various services, whose satisfaction still constitutes a challenge for the entrepreneurs.

The draining of the Moatize mine, as well as the transportation of other goods and

commodities, created opportunities for public and private investment in finding additional alternatives to the Sena Line.

Our vision for transportation is to guarantee the creation of an efficient multi-modal transportation system that responds to the demands of the development of the nation and of the districts in particular. The operationalization of this system will put an integrated transportation system with easy options, connections, and interchanges at the disposition of the citizens. Also, a part of this vision is the revitalization of public enterprises for the transportation of passengers through the allocation of means of transport such as buses, ferries, cars, and a fleet of aircraft.

We have seen advances in the improvement of transportation for persons and goods. The now rehabilitated section of the Sena Line ensures that the railroads reach the districts of Dondo, Muanza, Cheringoma, and Marromeu, transporting people and facilitating the delivery of the products of mining, and growing sugar cane and cereals.

Our commitment is to put information and communication technologies, which will soon be available at the level of all of the districts, at the service of our people and the development of Mozambique. In the materialization of this commitment, we are pleased to note the growth of the fixed telephone system, in which we have gone from the coverage of sixty-eight districts in 2004 to one hundred and sixteen in 2008, and the mobile telephone system, which has expanded from seventy-three districts in 2004 to one hundred and sixteen in 2008.

In terms of what has been completed to date, we have achieved, in global terms, an increase in the number of beneficiaries of the fixed telephone system from nearly 75,000 in 2004 to 80,000 in 2008. In the mobile system, we have increased from 600,000 beneficiaries in 2004 to 4 million in 2008.

With the arrival of fiber optic cable at Nampula, Pemba, and Lichinga, we now have all of the provincial capitals connected to this infrastructure. This offers a way to circulate information, including Internet services, at greater volumes and in real time, reliably.

We can note with satisfaction, esteemed Deputies, that thanks to the implementation of our vision, in terms of the technologies for information and communication, today more districts are connected to each other, the nation, and the world by means of fixed and mobile phones.

The roads and bridges have a very important role in the connection of the production centers with the markets. Within this area, various interventions were completed with the goal of improving the quality and security of the roadways for the circulation of people and goods.

The creation of a financial capacity in the districts through decentralized funds facilitated the activities for rehabilitation and maintenance of the roads at the local level. These activities are complemented by the interventions at the central level, which resulted in the rehabilitation of several sections, and also in the construction of the bridges at Moamba in Maputo, at Guijá in Gaza, at Lugela in Zambézia, at Meluli in Nampula, and at Luambala in Niassa, among others.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The construction of the bridge over the Zambezi River, our National Pride, a catalyst for our economy and a point of encounter and reencounter with our Mozambican identity, is complete.

The connection between Chimuara, in the District of Mopeia, and Caia, in the district of the same name, symbolizes and crystallizes the permanent connection between different parts of our beautiful Mozambique by road, and facilitates:

- contact and mutual knowledge among Mozambicans;
- consolidation of friendships between people who represent the socio-cultural diversity of our country; and
- diversification of the politics of Mozambicans.

The bridge over the Zambezi River also permits the intensive and uninterrupted circulation of goods produced in various corners of this country of heroes, facilitating the interconnection and greater dynamization of our economy at the national scale.

This achievement, Esteemed Deputies, reinforces the sense of national unity that was the dream of Eduardo Mondlane and of other creators of our national identity.

Our focus on the financial system was based on:

- the expansion of the base and network of branches;
- the expansion of the bank, whose network increased from twenty-eight districts in 2004 to forty-four at the present time;
- the valuation of our national currency, the Metical; and
- the establishment of a system for the electronic payment of expenses (e-sistafe), in more than fifty districts.

The dynamization of productive and commercial activity stimulated:

- the collection of revenues from internal and international business sources;
- the increase in the export of goods; and
- the increase in international reserves.

With the improvement of the business environment, we were able to attract more public and private investment, which has stimulated the creation of more jobs.

As a result of our interventions in the economy, the Country was able to achieve positive results in spite of the adversities which affected our country, such that the average increase in the Gross National Product was 7.7 percent a figure which is within the parameters of our *Five Year Plan*.

Esteemed Deputies,

We have honored our commitment to guarantee our national sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. For this purpose, we decided on the rigorous implementation of the constitutional provisions for our defense and security forces, which has ensured the normal exercise of sovereignty, the maintenance of public and democratic order, and the normal functioning of our institutions and economy.

Within the sphere of our external policies, we defended the consolidation of the South African

Development Community (SADC) as our organization for regional integration. In this context, we contributed to the political stabilization of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and were pleased to note that after the formation of the Inclusive Government of Zimbabwe, with the global political accord:

- mutual confidence among the parties was consolidated;
- the SADC gave its full support to the plan for economic recovery;
- the political and economic situation saw improvements; and
- the international community gave encouraging signs of support for the process.

We continue to contribute to the politico-diplomatic actions of the SADC and the African Union (AU) in the search for a lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In relation to Madagascar, we defend a negotiated solution to the dispute between the parties with a view toward reinstating constitutional order.

Our visits to various countries in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe, the visits to our country by high foreign dignitaries, among them heads of state and government of countries that are brothers and friends, and our participation in international forums were opportunities to witness the prestige that our country enjoys in the community of nations.

With regard to our actions in external politics and cooperation, we were able to ensure:

- the direct support of the state budget, which was following a growing evolution as much in the number of partners involved as in the volume of resources put at our disposal;
- the forgiveness or canceling of part of our foreign debt;
- the attraction of more foreign investment and tourists;
- the reversion of the HCB to the country;
- the suppression of visas with member countries of the SADC having common borders;

- the opening of our market to the region within the sphere of the Free Trade Zone; and
- the reinforcement of our relationships of friendship, solidarity, and cooperation with other countries, peoples, and international organizations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While keeping in mind that there is still much to do, we have to capitalize on the meaningful results that we have achieved in the districts, in order to accelerate the development of our economy and our society. For this purpose, we need to:

- consolidate the process of decentralization that is in progress;
- consolidate the implementation of the Green Revolution strategy; and
- attract more investments in the infrastructures of support in an integrated, sustainable, and lasting manner.

Our challenge is to continue:

- to consolidate our democratic legal state, national unity, self-esteem, and culture of peace;
- to promote the culture of work and thrift;
- to guarantee basic social services;
- to take an active part in the processes for the maintenance of peace and integration in the region and throughout the continent, securing political and economic security for the harmonious coexistence of our peoples; and
- to ensure the monitoring and support of Mozambican communities abroad.

Esteemed Deputies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are only three months from the realization of our Fourth Presidential and Legislative elections and the first for the Provincial Assemblies. Because of their meaning and value for our people, our history, and for the construction of the democratic legal state, we appeal for the massive participation of all Mozambicans of voting age in the electoral census, which is in progress, and ask

them to exercise their civic right to vote on October 28th of this year.

For this reason, we challenge the Mozambican people—from Rovuma to Maputo, and from the eastern border to Zumbo—to make these elections a moment of consolidation of our national unity, of promotion of the culture of peace, tolerance, and respect for the institutions of law and for political diversity, unequivocally abstaining from all forms of the demonstration of violence and disturbance to public order and tranquility.

We thank Your Excellencies, esteemed Deputies, and through your mediation, all of the Mozambican people for your resolute commitment to the materialization of our national plan in the fight against poverty.

Within three days, the Mozambican nation, this nation of heroes, will celebrate the 34th Anniversary of our Declaration of National Independence. It was thanks to this independence that the Mozambicans could take on the deserved responsibility for creating their own destiny. We are here today, and from this podium, it is with honor and privilege that we are able to announce, Your Excellencies, that we have a state that:

- respects political diversity;
- loves peace;
- is clearly in development;
- has macroeconomic stability;
- has a sense of national solidarity;
- has international prestige;
- contributes to the peace and stability of the region and the world; and
- has a clear vision of the path to take in the fight against poverty and for our well-being.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION.

MOÇAMBIQUE

Discurso: Comunicação de Sua

Excelência Armando Emílio Guebuza,

Presidente da República de

Moçambique, sobre o Estado

Geral da Nação

22 Junho de 2009

É com justificada e Sendo esta Comunicação à Nação, a última no mandato que está prestes a terminar, honra-nos que o estejamos a fazer em plenas comemorações do Ano Eduardo Mondlane, Arquitecto da Unidade Nacional, que já no longínquo ano de 1962, com a sua invulgar sabedoria, visionava um Moçambique independente, livre do jugo colonial e da pobreza. Para nós, os seus ideais constituíram, constituem e constituirão sempre fonte inesgotável de inspiração na construção da nossa Pátria Amada.

Renovada emoção, que nos dirigimos a Vossas Excelências Senhores Deputados e, por vosso intermédio, ao maravilhoso Povo Moçambicano para apresentar a Informação sobre a Situação Geral da Nação em cumprimento do disposto na alínea b) do artigo 159 da Constituição da República de Moçambique.

A apresentação desta comunicação constitui, para nós, um momento privilegiado para informar ao País, sobre a vida da Nação a vários níveis, particularmente sobre a crescente melhoria da qualidade de vida no nosso belo Moçambique e das oportunidades criadas para a realização individual, familiar e colectiva.

Transcorridos mais de quatro anos da nossa governação, apraz-nos constatar que esta sublime e nobre forma de comunicação com a Nação Moçambicana tem-nos proporcionado gratificantes e inesquecíveis lições de aprofundamento da democracia multipartidária,

de Unidade Nacional e de promoção da cultura de paz. Por isso, queremos saudar o Povo Moçambicano, do Rovuma ao Maputo, e do Índico ao Zumbo, pela sua entrega resoluta às acções de desenvolvimento e, sobretudo, pela sua inestimável contribuição na manutenção do clima de paz. Saudamos, de forma particular:

- o nosso Parlamento, pela contribuição na nobre acção legislativa, decisiva na aceleração do passo que estamos a imprimir na luta contra a pobreza;
- os nossos Ilustres Deputados, pelo louvável trabalho realizado nos Círculos Eleitorais, nas Bancadas, nas Comissões de Trabalho e no Plenário;
- os partidos políticos, com ou sem representação parlamentar, que no exercício da liberdade de expressão, têm dado o seu contributo:
 - na consolidação da Unidade Nacional;
 - na construção do Estado de Direito Democrático;
 - no aprofundamento da democracia multipartidária;
 - na promoção da cultura de paz;
 - no aprofundamento do debate pluralista sobre as questões nacionais e na procura de soluções para os seus principais desafios; e
 - na promoção dos valores da moçambicanidade, da auto-estima e da consciência patriótica.
- os nossos Combatentes da Luta de Libertação Nacional que, uma vez mais, inspirados nos ideais de Eduardo Mondlane, têm dado o seu contributo e transmitido as suas experiências às novas gerações para que a luta contra a pobreza resulte num Moçambique mais próspero, solidário e coeso;
- as Forças da Defesa e Segurança pela manutenção da Lei, Ordem e Tranquilidade Públicas e na Defesa da Soberania;
- os nossos camponeses, trabalhadores e empresários, nos vários ramos de actividade, pela forma árdua e dedicada com que têm contribuído para a criação da riqueza e do bem estar na Família Moçambicana;

- as instituições do Estado e os respectivos funcionários, particularmente os professores, de todos os níveis de ensino, o pessoal de saúde, especialmente os médicos, enfermeiros e técnicos de saúde, em geral, que mesmo com as conhecidas dificuldades conjunturais, não têm abdicado do seu papel de servir a sociedade;
- os nossos Administradores distritais, nossos Comandantes na Luta Contra a Pobreza no distrito, pelo empenho, dedicação e criatividade demonstrados e pela sua capacidade de lidar com a população;
- as mulheres e os jovens moçambicanos, pela dianteira que têm estado a assumir na entrega dos moçambicanos nas várias missões da pátria, constituindo, por isso, o expoente máximo de manifestação de dedicação na luta contra pobreza;
- as instituições da sociedade civil, nossas parceiras na promoção do desenvolvimento social e económico;
- os Líderes e comunidades religiosas, pelo seu contributo na educação cívica, na promoção da cultura de paz, diálogo e bem-estar da sociedade;
- as instituições privadas que, através de acções de responsabilidade social, têm contribuído na promoção da educação, da saúde, do desporto da cultura, entre outras bem como na mitigação dos efeitos das calamidades naturais;
- os Órgãos de Comunicação Social e seus profissionais, pela assídua, crítica e criativa divulgação da informação nacional e internacional bem como na formação, educação da sociedade e na construção da consciência patriótica e de cidadania;
- os nossos concidadãos portadores de deficiência, que mesmo com as dificuldades que ainda enfrentam têm se engajado de forma proactiva, à luz da nossa agenda de governação, na busca de soluções não só para a sua situação, como também na mudança de atitude e comportamento da sociedade;
- os profissionais da Cultura, particularmente da música, dança, teatro, cinema, literatura,

fotografia, humor e de outras expressões culturais e artísticas que no seu quotidiano e de forma abnegada, têm contribuído na valorização e preservação do nosso património histórico e cultural;

- os Líderes Comunitários pela sua contribuição na organização, mobilização e enquadramento das comunidades nas acções de luta contra a pobreza; e
- os parceiros de desenvolvimento pelo seu valioso e contínuo apoio às instituições do Estado e ao Povo Moçambicano.

Guiámo-nos, Excelências, como sempre, pelo nobre ideal e prática de Unidade Nacional que nos tem permitido motivar, engajar, enquadrar e responsabilizar os moçambicanos de todos os estratos, camadas e grupos sociais, de diversas origens, crenças e filiações político-partidárias nas tarefas do desenvolvimento desta Pátria de Heróis.

Guiámo-nos ainda pela auto-estima que, uma vez mais, despertou o orgulho de ser moçambicano, a valorização do que é nosso e a força de lutar pelo bem-estar pessoal, familiar e da Nação.

MINHAS SENHORAS E MEUS SENHORES,
A Nação moçambicana constrói-se com referências:

- a. dos seus mais queridos filhos que protagonizam feitos de particular realce;
- b. de locais de especial significado histórico; e
- c. de manifestações singular dimensão nacional e internacional.

Neste contexto, vários eventos serviram de plataforma da consolidação da Nação. Dos mais marcantes, realçamos o vasto programa de exaltação dos nossos heróis e locais históricos, com particular destaque para:

- a consagração de 2009, como Ano Eduardo Mondlane, o Arquitecto da Unidade Nacional e figura lendária do nosso processo de libertação;
- a celebração dos 75 anos depois do nascimento de Samora Moisés Machel,

proclamador da nossa Independência Nacional, primeiro Presidente da República; e

- a celebração dos 40 anos após a morte de outros destacados jovens da Geração do 25 de Setembro nomeadamente, Filipe Samuel Magaia, Tomás Nduda, John Issa, Mateus Sansão Muthemba, José Macamo e Paulo Samuel Kankhomba, que derramaram o seu sangue pela nossa libertação.

Enche-nos de particular alegria, a proclamação como Património Cultural:

- de Matchedje, no Niassa, aldeia que acolheu o II Congresso da FRELIMO, por ocasião das celebrações dos 40 anos da realização deste evento histórico;
- da aldeia de Nwadjahane, em Gaza, berço do Presidente Eduardo Mondlane; e
- de Chilembene, em Gaza, terra natal do Presidente Samora Machel;

Celebramos ainda a proclamação, pela Organização das Nações Unidas para Educação Ciência e Cultura (UNESCO), sob proposta do nosso Governo, do Nyau e da Timbila, como Obras-Primas do Património Oral e Imaterial da Humanidade.

Momentos de realce na vida da Nação que contribuíram para o reforço da Unidade Nacional, través da convivência entre moçambicanos de diferentes origens étnica, cultural, racial, religiosa e social foram os festivais nacionais dos jogos desportivos escolares e da cultura.

A II Conferência Nacional sobre Cultura foi o culminar de reflexões e debates que tiveram início nos distritos e continuaram nas províncias sobre o papel e lugar da cultura no desenvolvimento social e económico da Nação moçambicana. O conhecimento que resultou deste evento será de uma valiosa contribuição no processo da planificação do desenvolvimento integrado do nosso Moçambique.

Outro momento de encontro nacional foi o percurso, por todo o País, por ocasião dos 30 anos da Independência Nacional, da Chama da

Unidade, símbolo da nossa coesão. Esperar, tocar, receber e transportar a tocha, ao lado da Bandeira Nacional, gerou momentos de júbilo popular, de festas espontâneas, de manifestações de patriotismo e sentimento de pertença à mesma Pátria.

A conquista de medalhas, pelos nossos desportistas, proporcionou a Nação momentos de muita alegria, nomeadamente, no Basquetebol Feminino e Masculino, Atletismo, Ténis, Hóquei em Patins, Voleibol e Tang So Doo.

Estas celebrações, homenagens e manifestações têm o condão de assegurar a preservação da História do Povo Moçambicano, registando nos seus mais preciosos anais, a heroicidade e talento dos moçambicanos e manter viva a chama da Unidade Nacional. Elas contribuem, em grande medida, no combate às tentativas de distorção da nossa história, de subestimar a bravura, criatividade e habilidades dos moçambicanos na reconquista de sua identidade nacional.

SENHORES DEPUTADOS,

A consolidação do nosso Estado de Direito Democrático é uma prioridade na nossa acção governativa. Isto explica o nosso empenho na edificação de uma Administração Pública que impulse o desenvolvimento, através da sua maior eficiência e eficácia e da observância de normas ético-deontológicas pelos funcionários e agentes do Estado, que têm por tarefa melhor servir o cidadão e as instituições. Isto também ilustra, porque embarcamos no combate ao burocratismo, o espírito de deixa andar e à corrupção e pelo fortalecimento dos órgãos locais.

Na prossecução deste desiderato, temos estado a impulsionar Reformas no Sector Público, em particular, através:

- a. da desconcentração e descentralização;
- b. da implementação da estratégia e do plano nacional anti-corrupção;
- c. da profissionalização da Função Pública; e
- d. da gestão estratégica dos recursos humanos do Estado e sua motivação, através da implementação da política salarial de médio prazo.

Um dos resultados da descentralização foi o aumento do número das autarquias de 33 para 43. Este processo está a alargar e a consolidar a plataforma de maior envolvimento do cidadão na busca de soluções aos seus problemas.

No quadro da implementação destas reformas, a mudança de atitude na administração pública no País é notória, desde a repartição até aos serviços integrados, como sejam, os Balcões de Atendimento Único. De igual modo, registamos maior celeridade na tramitação do expediente, com realce para o licenciamento do exercício da actividade económica.

Na consolidação do Estado de Direito Democrático temos estado a prestar particular atenção ao sistema de administração da justiça como um dos seus pilares fundamentais. Defendemos assim, uma justiça mais célere, mais transparente e cada vez mais próxima do cidadão.

A aprovação da legislação pertinente ao melhor funcionamento do Sistema de Administração da Justiça, da sociedade e da economia, a implementação de um programa de reformas na legislação tanto material como processual têm estado a garantir a adequação da dinâmica do desenvolvimento aos ditames do Estado de Direito que estamos a consolidar no quotidiano.

O combate ao crime foi sempre matéria da nossa atenção. Temos, para maior sucesso das nossas acções, estado a envolver as comunidades, particularmente através do policiamento comunitário.

A formação, capacitação e profissionalização de quadros deste sistema e sua colocação a vários níveis, priorizando os distritos, tem também em vista capacitar o Estado no combate ao crime.

A formação, atendendo as necessidades específicas de cada instituição do Sistema, visa garantir o respeito pelos Direitos Humanos, particularmente o respeito pela vida humana, em estrita observância às normas ético-deontológicas que orientam a actuação dos profissionais do Sistema de Administração da Justiça. É este respeito pela vida e o cumprimento das normas que vão nos assegurar que nas nossas instituições prisionais não se perca a vida humana, por negligência profissional.

Ainda no contexto do respeito pela vida humana, reafirmamos que cabe somente aos Tribunais julgar e condenar com base nas leis em vigor no nosso País. Por isso, desencorajamos e condenamos quaisquer práticas de actos que visem fazer a justiça pelas próprias mãos.

Temos vindo a tomar medidas que se têm reflectido na melhoria do desempenho de cada uma das instituições integrantes do sistema, por um lado, e na sua maior coordenação, por outro.

Estas acções são complementadas pela construção dos palácios de justiça, pela institucionalização de formas alternativas de resolução de litígios e pela expansão dos serviços de assistência jurídica ao cidadão.

Acima das dificuldades, o caminho percorrido motiva-nos a continuar, com confiança, a trabalhar por um Moçambique cada vez mais justo e próspero, em que o respeito dos direitos e liberdades dos cidadãos, apanágio do Estado de Direito Democrático, se promova e cultive em cada cidadão e, sobretudo, em cada agente e funcionário do Estado.

MINHAS SENHORAS E MEUS SENHORES,

A Presidência Aberta e Inclusiva revelou-se numa metodologia apropriada e motivadora, de contacto directo com o nosso Povo, com as instituições e com os diferentes segmentos da sociedade, para deles colher ensinamentos sobre a gestão de assuntos comunitários e sobre o processo de tomada de decisão e com eles partilhar experiências sobre a luta contra a pobreza.

Nessa interacção com o nosso maravilhoso Povo, expusemos a nossa Governação à avaliação popular e, do diálogo resultou uma apropriação colectiva dos ganhos e partilha dos desafios e perspectivas.

Para além desta, o nosso País submeteu-se voluntariamente à avaliação no âmbito do Mecanismo Africano de Revisão de Pares, uma decisão que resulta do nosso cometimento de envolver a nossa sociedade na identificação e discussão dos assuntos de interesse nacional, o que tem permitido apresentar propostas de solução, onde se revelarem fraquezas.

Este mecanismo é complementar a outras iniciativas internas sob forma de fóruns de consulta e avaliação, como sejam o Observatório do Desenvolvimento, a Comissão Consultiva do Trabalho e as Reuniões Anuais com a Confederação das Associações Económicas.

Iniciamos a nossa governação, Minhas Senhoras, Meus Senhores, dando maior expressão e protagonismo ao Distrito, como pólo de desenvolvimento e base de planificação social e económica do nosso País. Neste contexto, foi alocado o Orçamento de Investimento de Iniciativas Locais, conhecido como os sete milhões, direccionado para a produção de mais alimentos e criação de mais postos de trabalho, gerando renda para as famílias.

Com os sete milhões, iniciamos uma mudança do paradigma de desenvolvimento, isto é, o beneficiário passou a ter um papel de protagonista neste processo. Resgatando e consolidando a auto-estima, induzimos maior confiança na geração de capacidades locais, particularmente na exploração dos recursos naturais disponíveis, alguns dos quais subaproveitados.

No centro deste processo de mudança está o Conselho Consultivo, um dos mecanismos de participação da população na Governação. O envolvimento da comunidade e a influência da sociedade civil na identificação das prioridades de desenvolvimento local ganhou assim um novo ímpeto.

Um ganho fundamental alcançado é a utilização deste mecanismo pelas comunidades na prestação de contas pelos dirigentes, contribuindo, desta forma, para uma gestão mais transparente do bem público.

A vida nos Distritos conheceu uma nova dinâmica, como resultado da descentralização da planificação e gestão de recursos humanos. Com efeito, a decisão sobre as promoções e progressões e sobre o recrutamento de técnicos já é tomada a nível distrital.

Em complemento aos sete milhões, os distritos passaram a dispôr dos orçamentos de funcionamento e de investimento bem como de outros fundos descentralizados, nomeadamente, para a construção acelerada de salas de aula, para

a manutenção de estradas e para a abertura de furos de água potável. Disto resulta:

- a. a emergência de pequenos empresários locais nas áreas de agro processamento, confecção de vestuário, latoaria, materiais de construção, aumentando o nível de negócios e valorizando a mão de obra e talentos locais;
- b. o início da prestação de mais serviços a nível distrital;
- c. o aumento da produção, da produtividade e de áreas de cultivo;
- d. a introdução, em alguns distritos, da prática de horticultura, piscicultura, avicultura e apicultura, entre outras, contribuindo para a segurança alimentar e nutricional;
- e. a introdução e relançamento da produção de determinadas culturas e de tecnologias de produção; e
- f. o aumento da massa monetária em circulação no distrito e na valorização do metical.

Ainda no quadro da incidência das nossas actividades no distrito, asseguramos que mais cidadãos tenham acesso à água potável. Foi em resultado deste desempenho que nas zonas rurais, subimos a taxa de cobertura de 40%, em 2004, para 52%, em 2008. Isto propiciou a redução das distâncias a percorrer, o que tem reduzido o índice de doenças diarreicas nas áreas cobertas, resultando em grandes avanços na promoção da saúde pública.

Não obstante os resultados positivos alcançados, os sete milhões, colocam-nos ainda desafios, particularmente de capacitação de todos os intervenientes na concepção, aprovação, implementação, monitoria e avaliação dos projectos. Por outro lado, importa que continuemos empenhados na capacitação do empresariado local para poder realizar empreitadas de média dimensão, financiadas pelos outros fundos descentralizados pois, o nosso compromisso é assegurar que estes fundos, incluindo os sete milhões, circulem e tenham crescente impacto social e económico no distrito.

SENHORES DEPUTADOS,

Temos vindo a implementar as nossas políticas direccionadas à contínua melhoria de condições de vida do nosso Povo, numa conjuntura de ocorrência de várias adversidades.

Uma das adversidades que em muito abalou a nossa economia foi a crise de petróleo, que se consubstanciou numa subida contínua e persistente de preços de combustíveis. A título elucidativo, o preço médio do barril passou de cinquenta dólares, em 2004, para noventa dólares, em 2008, atingindo o valor máximo de cento e quarenta dólares no mesmo ano.

Sendo Moçambique um país importador de combustíveis, esta crise levou à diminuição do volume de importações e consequente aumento do custo do combustível, com efeitos na vida económica e social.

Outra adversidade com impacto negativo na vida do nosso Povo, foi a subida vertiginosa do preço de cereais em que, por exemplo, o preço do arroz, por tonelada, passou de cento e quinze, dólares americanos em 2007, para setecentos e vinte, em 2008.

Estas duas adversidades afectaram profundamente o quotidiano de cada um de nós e precipitaram a perturbação da ordem e tranquilidade públicas, tendo resultado em danos materiais e prejuízos para muitas famílias e sectores de actividade.

Para além das adversidades acima referidas confrontamo-nos com outras, sendo de mencionar as seguintes:

- as calamidades naturais cíclicas, como a seca, as cheias e os ciclones, gravadas pelas mudanças climáticas globais, que causaram perdas de vidas humanas e destruíram casas e culturas diversas e infra-estruturas públicas e privadas;
- as queimadas descontroladas, de diferentes proporções, ocorridas em várias partes do território nacional, que resultaram em danos humanos e materiais;
- as explosões do paiol de Mahlazine que semearam luto e dor, e destruíram bens nas cidades de Maputo e Matola;

- os actos de xenofobia na África do Sul que se saldaram na morte de concidadãos nossos e na perda dos seus bens; e
- a actual crise financeira internacional, cujas consequências exactas são ainda imprevisíveis, mas que o seu impacto já se faz sentir em diferentes sectores de actividade e famílias, exigindo de todos nós, serenidade, atitude de contenção e concertação de acções na busca de alternativas.

Mesmo nestas circunstâncias adversas, com a participação do nosso maravilhoso Povo e apoio da comunidade internacional, implementamos medidas inter-sectoriais que resultaram na mitigação dos efeitos dessas perturbações e crises. Asseguramos assim, a nossa coesão e a manutenção de um ambiente favorável para continuarmos a levar a cabo, como um Povo, a grandiosa missão de edificarmos uma Nação próspera.

A operacionalização do distrito como pólo de desenvolvimento, passa pelo maior investimento na educação e saúde. Logramos, neste quadro, alargar a rede escolar, a todos os níveis, com enfoque para os ensinos básico, técnico profissional, superior público e privado e formação de professores.

O número total de escolas do ensino geral, em todo o País, cresceu de forma significativa tendo passado de cerca de dez mil, em 2004, para cerca de doze mil, em 2008. Este crescimento reflectiu-se no aumento do número de ingressos, tendo passado de cerca de quatro milhões, em 2004, para cerca de cinco milhões de alunos, em 2008.

O nosso compromisso de formação do capital humano tem se traduzido no aumento das instituições de ensinos técnico-profissional e superior, públicas e privadas, em todas as províncias, algumas das quais sediadas nos distritos e numa nova dinâmica de graduações. Particular realce neste alargamento é a maior aposta na formação de profissionais de educação, de saúde e da agricultura.

Stão a funcionar, até ao presente momento, setenta e quatro escolas do Ensino Técnico

Profissional, em todo o País, oferecendo uma gama de cursos, incluindo os de utilidade prática e imediata para as nossas comunidades. Isto permitiu graduar até 2008 cerca de sete mil profissionais, contra os cerca de quatro mil e quinhentos graduados, em 2004.

Constitui motivo de celebração que tenhamos crescido de 17 para 38 instituições de ensino superior entre 2004 até ao presente momento. De cerca de dois mil oitocentos graduados passamos para mais de dez mil e quinhentos. Hoje, a Nação moçambicana conta com mais de sessenta mil estudantes universitários.

A sociedade testemunhou igualmente o alargamento das actividades:

- a. de extensão e pesquisa universitárias; e
- b. de ensino à distância, fazendo uso das tecnologias de informação e comunicação, já acessíveis em todas as capitais provinciais e num número crescente de distritos, através dos Centros Multimédia Comunitários e Telecentros.

Com efeito, hoje, notamos, com orgulho, que mais moçambicanos frequentam os ensinos primário, secundário, técnico-profissional e superior, em todo o País, em resposta à nossa aposta de formação do capital humano, competitivo a nível nacional, regional e internacional, com consideração das potencialidades económicas das diferentes províncias do nosso País.

Apraz-nos notar a forma como os estudantes universitários, pela dinâmica de vida existente nos Distritos, de forma entusiástica e espontânea, se organizaram à volta do movimento “Férias no Distrito”. Através desta iniciativa os estudantes:

- a. interagem com outros jovens, com funcionários e com a população, trocando experiências;
- b. apoiam o Governo Distrital nas actividades de Planificação; e
- c. buscam oportunidades de emprego.

Em resultado deste processo, alguns destes jovens já estão enquadrados em actividades produtivas a nível distrital, no âmbito da prerrogativa que os Distritos têm de recrutar técnicos. Na verdade, hoje é notável a presença, nos distritos, de técnicos com formação superior em diferentes áreas.

A par da expansão do ensino, temos vindo a tomar medidas direccionadas à melhoria da sua qualidade, a todos os níveis, dentre as quais se destacam:

- a melhoria na distribuição do livro escolar gratuito;
- a reforma no sub-sistema de formação de professores;
- a eliminação da contratação de novos docentes sem formação profissional;
- a criação do sistema nacional de acreditação, avaliação e garantia de qualidade e do seu órgão implementador;
- a implementação da Estratégia de Formação de Professores do Ensino Superior;
- o relançamento da extensão universitária; e
- a entrada em funcionamento do Conselho Nacional de Avaliação de Qualidade do ensino superior.

Os sucessos alcançados na área de desporto, em muito, têm estado a valorizar as nossas intervenções:

- a. na reorganização das Federações e Associações Desportivas;
- b. no desenvolvimento das infra-estruturas desportivas;
- c. na alocação de recursos financeiros;
- d. no acompanhamento regular das actividades desportivas; e
- e. no diálogo permanente com os nossos desportistas.

MINHAS SENHORAS E MEUS SENHORES,

A formação de mais profissionais de saúde, o alargamento da rede sanitária e a elevação da qualidade de serviços de saúde têm, igualmente, estado a ter impacto de relevo nos Distritos.

Foram assim colocados mais médicos e outros profissionais de saúde. Em termos de cobertura passamos de 62 distritos, em 2004, para 115, neste momento, com pelo menos um médico.

Esta notável presença de profissionais de saúde nos distritos, conjugada com a construção, a reabilitação, o apetrechamento de unidades sanitárias e a afectação de ambulâncias a todos os distritos, tem vindo a melhorar o acesso e a qualidade dos serviços de saúde para muitos moçambicanos.

Pela primeira vez, nos últimos vinte anos, o número de casos de Malária e de mortes por esta doença registou uma redução progressiva. Para tal, contribuíram as medidas de pulverização intra-domiciliária, cujo sucesso contou com a colaboração do nosso Povo e a melhoria do seu diagnóstico e tratamento.

Ilustra este sucesso, o facto de, a nível nacional, a partir de 2007, os casos de Malária terem reduzido para cerca de 24% e os de morte reduzido para cerca de 35%.

As réplicas da campanha do saneamento do meio e de promoção de higiene individual e colectiva têm estado a contribuir para tornar irreversíveis estes sucessos e para combater a cólera e outras doenças diarreicas.

As iniciativas presidenciais de combate contra o HIV-SIDA e pela saúde da mãe e da criança visavam uma maior consciencialização dos moçambicanos, representados pelos diferentes segmentos e extractos sociais, sobre os efeitos tanto do HIV-SIDA como da Saúde da mãe e da criança na família, na sociedade e na economia. Foi consenso, nestes encontros, que estas áreas constituem já um problema de saúde pública e que devemos agir individual e colectivamente de forma célere para reduzir o seu impacto sócio-económico.

Estas iniciativas replicaram-se nas províncias e nos Distritos, tendo tido impacto nas acções de prevenção, tratamento e mitigação do HIV-SIDA e no aumento de partos institucionais cuja taxa de cobertura passou de 48%, em 2005, para 55%, em 2008.

Assim, expandimos a oferta do tratamento anti-retroviral de 19 distritos, em 2004, para os

128 distritos do País, o que nos permite massificar este tratamento em benefício dos nossos compatriotas infectados, tendo passado dos cerca de seis mil, em 2004, para cerca de cento e trinta e cinco mil, em 2008.

Temos a responsabilidade individual, colectiva e institucional de alterar a tendência do alastramento de infecções por HIV-SIDA, implementando a nossa Estratégia de Aceleração da Prevenção da Infecção pelo HIV. O nosso objectivo é assegurar que o HIV/SIDA não destrua:

- a. a família;
- b. o ambiente familiar para educação das nossas crianças; e
- c. as nossas conquistas na formação do capital humano, sobretudo na nossa Administração Pública e no sector empresarial, comprometendo as nossas perspectivas de desenvolvimento.

Em relação à saúde materna, do recém-nascido e da criança o nosso compromisso consiste na redução contínua e irreversível das mortes de crianças e mulheres e da garantia de um ambiente apropriado de saúde à nossa sociedade, particularmente nas zonas rurais. Por isso, é importante a continuação dos investimentos tanto na formação de quadros como na melhoria de serviços.

Como tivemos a ocasião de informar a esta Magna Casa, em Dezembro do ano passado, a Lepre, Senhores Deputados, deixou de constituir um problema de saúde pública na nossa Pátria Amada.

O nosso comprometimento para com a causa da igualdade do género leva-nos a tomar medidas que reforcem a valorização da mulher nas esferas social, económica e política de modo a assegurar que a família, como instituição de transmissão de valores e centro de criação da personalidade humana, se fortaleça. Com efeito, as diferentes medidas tomadas traduziram-se, por exemplo:

- a. em mais ingresso da rapariga no ensino e a concluir diferentes níveis de formação escolar e académica;

- b. na adopção do plano nacional da violência contra a mulher; e
- c. na promoção da participação da mulher nas esferas económica e política.

Como resultado destas medidas, notamos, por um lado, uma maior consciência da sociedade em relação aos direitos da mulher, mais jovens do sexo feminino a concluírem diferentes níveis de ensino, particularmente técnico-profissional e superior. Por outro lado, é mais visível a representação da mulher nos Órgãos de Soberania, na Administração Pública e no sector empresarial.

Temos, igualmente, constatado que na sociedade moçambicana ocorrem acções com vista à protecção da criança, da pessoa portadora de deficiência e idosa. Neste quadro, alargam-se os programas de assistência social e acções de solidariedade de moçambicano para moçambicano, relevantes na integração social e na mitigação da pobreza dos nossos concidadãos.

Estas acções de solidariedade são complementadas pela crescente oferta de serviços públicos apropriados para que os nossos idosos, órfãos e concidadãos com deficiência visual, auditiva, físico-motora, atraso mental, fala e outros grupos vulneráveis possam elevar a sua auto-estima.

Temos estado empenhados na busca de soluções sustentáveis e duradouras para o problema dos Desmobilizados de Guerra, no âmbito do Acordo Geral de Paz. Neste processo, contamos com o envolvimento e participação das diferentes associações, representantes destes nossos compatriotas.

A concertação social privilegia e aprofunda o diálogo tripartido, reforçando a parceria entre o Governo, os empregadores e trabalhadores. Nesta concertação, os parceiros discutem o desempenho da economia e contribuem com suas opiniões, sempre valiosas, o que permitiu, por exemplo, a criação de consensos para a fixação de salário mínimo por diferentes sectores de actividade.

Através do nosso empenho na valorização e protecção do trabalhador temos logrado:

- a. imprimir maior celeridade no pagamento das pensões usando serviços bancários;
- b. oferecer serviços de segurança social a outras categorias de trabalhadores;
- c. repôr a legalidade em várias instituições empregadoras, o que contribuiu no respeito dos direitos dos trabalhadores e normas de segurança no trabalho; e
- d. acelerar o pagamento do subsídio de funeral.

Através da Estratégia de Emprego e Formação Profissional, temos estado pois, a promover emprego para milhares de compatriotas nossos e iniciativas de formação profissional e de auto-emprego.

MINHAS SENHORAS E MEUS SENHORES,

A reversão da Hidroeléctrica de Cahora Bassa (HCB) para o controlo do nosso Estado criou oportunidades ao sector energético para uma maior dinamização da economia do País e de aceleração da electrificação dos distritos.

A expansão de rede Nacional de Transporte de Energia, impulsionou as nossas acções de electrificação. Desta expansão resultou a ligação de mais trinta e duas Sedes Distritais em Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Nampula, Zambézia, Tete, Manica, Sofala, Inhambane e Gaza, tendo aumentado o número de consumidores de energia de cerca de duzentos e oitenta e quatro mil, em 2004, para cerca de seiscentos e quinze mil consumidores, em 2008.

Com a ligação de Pemba e Lichinga à Rede Nacional de Transporte de Energia, todas as capitais provinciais passaram a estar ligadas à esta rede.

Adicionalmente e com base em sistemas isolados, como painéis solares e geradores a diesel, temos vindo a electrificar mais postos administrativos e localidades.

Com a provisão da energia através destes sistemas, criou-se um ambiente para emergência de pequenos negócios onde o Povo passou a usar, para além da própria energia, os sistemas de comunicação como rádios e telefones celulares. As unidades sanitárias passaram a ter melhores condições para a conservação de vacinas.

Ainda no sector de energia, a construção de bombas de combustíveis, tem aumentado o número de operadores de venda de petróleo nas zonas rurais facilitando o Povo na sua aquisição.

A nossa meta, Senhores Deputados, é electrificarmos todo o nosso Moçambique. A nossa prioridade, agora, é ligarmos todas as Sedes Distritais à Rede Nacional de Transporte de Energia e a partir daqui expandir para todos os Postos Administrativos e Localidades.

Continuamos a explorar cada vez mais o potencial energético de que dispomos, desenvolvendo acções que visam a exploração de mais fontes de energia, particularmente, as energias novas e renováveis, interligando-as à infra-estrutura de transporte de energia.

MINHAS SENHORAS E MEUS SENHORES,

No contexto do desenvolvimento rural integrado, o nosso compromisso é assegurar o aproveitamento racional e sustentável dos recursos hídricos, faunísticos, florestais e minerais com respeito à biodiversidade, protegendo os ecossistemas.

A agricultura no distrito deve garantir a segurança alimentar e nutricional do nosso Povo. A nossa intervenção neste sector permitiu-nos criar uma capacidade de produção local de sementes das culturas alimentares básicas como sejam, o milho, mapira, arroz, feijões e amendoim.

Nas nossas primeiras acções no contexto da Revolução Verde, operacionalizada pelo Plano de Acção de Produção de Alimentos, os distritos passaram a ter responsabilidades específicas na produção de determinadas culturas. Ainda no quadro deste plano foi possível:

- relançar os produtores familiares e de pequena escala;
- aumentar os serviços de extensão; e
- aumentar a nossa produção de cereais e leguminosas.

Na produção de cereais, apostamos nas culturas de arroz e do trigo, com particular realce. Com efeito, relançamos em grande escala a produção do arroz em Chókwe, Gaza e Nante

na Zambézia. A produção de arroz a nível nacional passou de cento e setenta e quatro mil toneladas na campanha 2004/2005, para duzentos e seis mil toneladas na campanha 2007/2008.

A título ilustrativo, a produção global de cereais passou de um milhão e novecentas mil toneladas, na campanha 2004/2005, para dois milhões e trezentos mil toneladas, na campanha 2007/2008.

Depois de três décadas, Moçambique retomou, Senhores Deputados, com uma entusiástica aderência dos nossos produtores, a produção do trigo. As áreas onde esta cultura espiga, podem ser vistas nos distritos de Lago, Sanga, Muembe e Lichinga em Niassa, Sussundenga e Bárue em Manica, Xai-Xai e Chókwe em Gaza, Manhiça em Maputo. Em Tsangano, Tete, intensificou-se a produção deste cereal ainda no âmbito da implementação do Plano de Acção de Produção de Alimentos e em cumprimento das responsabilidades do distrito na produção do trigo.

Como pudemos constatar, o relançamento da produção do arroz, trouxe oportunidades para o continuo crescimento do nosso empresariado, na medida em que o fornecimento de insumos e equipamentos associados à esta cultura, abre espaço para investimento privado. Este desafio também se coloca a cultura do trigo.

No debate sobre as culturas de rendimento, como cana-de-açúcar, tabaco, castanha de caju e jatropha, defendemos que elas têm um grande contributo para o desenvolvimento do país. No entanto, elas não devem prejudicar a produção de alimentos.

No domínio da actividade pecuária, como resultado das nossas múltiplas intervenções, registamos o aumento do efectivo do gado bovino de um milhão e duzentas mil cabeças, em 2004, para mais de um milhão e seiscentos mil, presentemente. O número de produtores familiares passou de cento e setenta e sete mil, em 2005, para trezentas e cinquenta e quatro mil famílias, neste momento. Este incremento significou mais gado de corte e para produção leiteira e tracção animal.

Para o contínuo sucesso das nossas acções na agricultura, continuamos a prestar particular

atenção ao acesso, uso e rentabilização da água no sector bem como à cadeia de valor, com particular ênfase para a produção, processamento, armazenamento, comercialização e consumo.

O sector empresarial é um importante parceiro do Governo na operacionalização do Distrito como Pólo de Desenvolvimento. O nosso empenho tem se traduzido na criação de um ambiente favorável para o desenvolvimento de negócios, através, por exemplo, do apoio na recuperação da capacidade dos operadores do sector comercial para desempenharem o seu papel na cadeia de valor do sector produtivo. Neste sentido, os fundos descentralizados para a gestão directa dos distritos têm vindo a contribuir na revitalização e intensificação da actividade comercial e empresarial naquelas unidades territoriais.

Assim, está sendo possível trazer ao sector formal os operadores informais, através da simplificação do licenciamento comercial, introduzindo o imposto simplificado para pequenos contribuintes, o que trouxe os nossos cidadãos ao sistema tributário nacional.

A divulgação do potencial turístico do nosso País, conjugada com:

- a. a crescente melhoria dos serviços turísticos e afins;
- b. a revitalização da exploração dos parques;
- c. a formação dos recursos humanos; e
- d. investimentos nas infra-estruturas turísticas está a tornar esta Pérola do Índico, num destino turístico privilegiado.

Deste modo, a actividade turística, nas suas mais diversas modalidades, tem estado a contribuir para a dinamização da actividade social e económica nos distritos.

Temos vindo, Minhas Senhoras, Meus Senhores, a tomar medidas, no contexto do conflito Homem-Fauna Bravia, para garantir a protecção das populações, e a sua segurança alimentar, pois, para nós, o Homem é o epicentro do desenvolvimento. Temos estado igualmente a promover a protecção da biodiversidade, para assegurar o equilíbrio ecológico e os rendimentos

que decorrem da sua exploração sustentável, para as comunidades.

As iniciativas de apoio ao empreendedorismo na área do turismo têm se reflectido no despoletar do interesse de mais moçambicanos na exploração da actividade turística e negócios afins.

Os investimentos no sector dos recursos minerais têm um impacto na economia nacional pois, têm estado a promover emprego para milhares de moçambicanos e a criar várias oportunidades de negócio, de pequena e média dimensão, nos distritos da sua implantação.

Estes investimentos têm estado a induzir, por exemplo em Moatize, Tete, o aumento da demanda na imobiliária, restaurantes e hotéis, transportes e serviços diversos, cuja satisfação constitui ainda desafio para o empresariado.

O escoamento do carvão de Moatize, bem como o transporte de outros bens e mercadorias criam oportunidades de investimento público e privado para encontrar alternativas adicionais à Linha de Sena.

A nossa visão nos transportes é garantir a implantação de um sistema de transporte intermodal eficiente e que responda às exigências do desenvolvimento da Nação e do distrito, em particular. A operacionalização deste sistema vai colocar à disposição do cidadão, um serviço integrado de transporte com facilidades de opção, interligação e permuta. A revitalização das empresas públicas de transporte de passageiros, através da alocação de meios circulantes, como autocarros, embarcações para travessia, automotoras e a frota de aeronaves enquadra-se nesta visão.

Registamos avanços na melhoria de transporte de pessoas e bens. O troço da Linha de Sena, já reabilitado, assegura que o comboio escale os Distritos de Dondo, Muanza, Cheringoma, Marromeu, transportando pessoas e facilitando o escoamento da produção mineira, açucareira e cerealífera.

O nosso compromisso é colocar as tecnologias de informação e comunicação ao serviço do nosso Povo e do desenvolvimento de Moçambique, o que passa pela sua disponibilização a nível de todos os Distritos. Na materialização deste

compromisso, apraz-nos notar o crescimento na área de telefonia fixa onde registamos uma cobertura de 68 distritos, em 2004, para 116, em 2008, e na telefonia móvel expandimos de 73 distritos, em 2004, para 111, em 2008.

Do que fizemos até hoje, conseguimos que, em termos globais, passássemos de cerca de setenta e cinco mil beneficiários dos serviços de telefonia fixa, em 2004, para oitenta mil, em 2008. Na telefonia móvel passamos de cerca de seiscentos mil beneficiários, em 2004, para quatro milhões em 2008.

Com a chegada da fibra óptica a Nampula, Pemba e Lichinga passamos a ter todas as capitais provinciais interligadas através desta infraestrutura que oferece maior volume de circulação de informação, incluindo serviços de internet, com fiabilidade e em tempo real.

Notamos, com satisfação, Senhores Deputados, que mercê da implementação desta nossa visão nas tecnologias de informação e comunicação, hoje mais distritos estão ligados entre si, à Nação e ao mundo, através das telefonias fixa e móvel.

As estradas e pontes têm um contributo de grande relevo para ligar os centros de produção e os mercados. Foram neste quadro, realizadas diferentes intervenções com vista a melhorar a transitabilidade e segurança rodoviárias, na circulação de pessoas e bens.

A criação da capacidade financeira nos Distritos, através dos fundos descentralizados, veio dinamizar as acções de reabilitação e manutenção das vias de acesso a nível local. Essas acções são complementadas pelas intervenções a nível central que resultaram na reabilitação de alguns troços e na construção das Pontes de Moamba, em Maputo; do Guijá, em Gaza, de Lugela, na Zambézia, de Meluli, em Nampula e de Luambala, em Niassa, entre outras.

MINHAS SENHORAS E MEUS SENHORES,

A construção da ponte sobre o Rio Zambeze, nosso Orgulho Nacional, catalisador da nossa economia e ponto de encontro e reencontro da nossa moçambicanidade, está concluída.

A ligação entre Chimuara, no distrito de Mopeia e Caia, no distrito do mesmo nome,

simboliza e cristaliza a ligação rodoviária permanente entre diferentes partes do nosso belo Moçambique, propiciando:

- a. o contacto e conhecimento mútuos entre moçambicanos;
- b. a consolidação da amizade entre pessoas que representam a diversidade sócio-cultural do nosso País; e
- c. a pluralidade política dos moçambicanos.

A ponte sobre o Rio Zambeze propicia ainda a circulação intensa e ininterrupta de bens produzidos em vários cantos desta Pátria de Heróis, facilitando a interligação e maior dinamização da nossa economia, à escala nacional.

Esta realização, Senhores Deputados, reforça o sentimento da Unidade Nacional, sonho de Eduardo Mondlane e de outros Obreiros da nossa nacionalidade.

O nosso enfoque no sistema financeiro consistiu:

- a. no alargamento da base e rede tributárias;
- b. na expansão da banca, cuja rede bancária passou de 28, em 2004, para 44 Distritos, no presente momento;
- c. na valorização da nossa moeda, o Metical; e
- d. na implantação do sistema de pagamento electrónico de despesas (e-sistafe), em mais de 50 distritos;

A dinamização da actividade produtiva e comercial impulsionou:

- a colecta da receita interna e sobre o comércio internacional;
- a. o incremento das exportações de bens; e
- b. o aumento das reservas internacionais.

Com a melhoria do ambiente de negócios, logramos atrair mais investimento público e privado, o que tem impulsionado a criação de mais postos de trabalho.

Em resultado destas nossas intervenções na economia, o País logrou alcançar resultados positivos, não obstante as adversidades que

assolaram o nosso País, tendo a taxa média do Produto Interno Bruto se situado em 7,7%, cifra que está dentro dos parâmetros do Quinquénio.

SENHORES DEPUTADOS,

Temos estado a honrar o nosso compromisso de garantir a soberania nacional, a independência e integridade territorial. Para o efeito, pautamos pela implementação rigorosa das disposições constitucionais sobre as forças de defesa e segurança, o que tem assegurado o exercício normal da soberania, da manutenção das Ordens Pública e Democrática, do funcionamento normal das instituições e da economia.

No âmbito da nossa política externa defendemos a consolidação da SADC como nossa organização de integração regional. Neste contexto, contribuímos na estabilização política da República do Zimbabwe e com agrado, notamos, que após a formação do Governo Inclusivo do Zimbabwe saído do Acordo Político Global:

- consolida-se a confiança mútua entre as partes;
- a SADC deu apoio multiforme ao Plano de Recuperação Económica;
- a situação política e económica regista melhorias; e
- a comunidade internacional dá sinais encorajadores de apoio ao processo.

Contribuímos ainda, nas acções político-diplomáticas da SADC e da União Africana de busca da paz duradoira na República Democrática do Congo.

Em relação ao Madagáscar, defendemos uma solução negociada do diferendo entre as Partes, com vista a reposição da ordem constitucional.

As nossas visitas a vários países de África, Américas, Ásia e Europa, as visitas ao nosso País de altos dignitários estrangeiros, dentre eles Chefes de Estado e de Governos de países irmãos e amigos e a nossa participação em fóruns internacionais foram uma oportunidade para testemunharmos o prestígio que o nosso País goza no concerto das Nações.

Da nossa actuação na política externa e de cooperação conseguimos assegurar:

- a. o apoio directo ao Orçamento do Estado que foi conhecendo uma evolução crescente, tanto no número de parceiros envolvidos, como no volume de recursos postos à nossa disposição;
- b. o perdão ou cancelamento de parte da nossa dívida externa;
- c. a atracção de mais investimento estrangeiro e turistas;
- d. a reversão da Hidroeléctrica de Cahora Bassa para o País;
- e. a supressão de vistos com países Membros da SADC com fronteira comum;
- f. a abertura do nosso mercado à região no quadro da Zona de Comércio Livre; e
- g. o reforço das relações de amizade, solidariedade e de cooperação com outros países, Povos e organismos internacionais.

MINHAS SENHORAS E MEUS SENHORES,

Mesmo tendo a consciência de que muito ficou ainda por fazer, temos que capitalizar os resultados significativos que alcançamos no distrito, de modo a acelerar o desenvolvimento da nossa economia e da nossa sociedade. Para o efeito, precisamos de:

- consolidar o processo de descentralização em curso;
- consolidar a implementação da estratégia de Revolução Verde; e
- atrair mais investimentos nas infra-estruturas de apoio, de forma integrada, sustentável e duradoira.

O nosso desafio é continuar:

- a consolidar o nosso Estado de Direito Democrático, a Unidade Nacional, a nossa auto-estima e a cultura de Paz;
- a promover a cultura de trabalho e de poupança;
- a garantir os serviços sociais básicos;
- a tomar parte activa nos processos de manutenção da paz e integração regional e

continental, procurando estabilidade política e económica para convivência harmoniosa dos Povos; e

- Assegurar o acompanhamento e apoio às comunidades moçambicanas no exterior;

SENHORES DEPUTADOS,
MINHAS SENHORAS E MEUS SENHORES

Estamos a escassos três meses da realização das nossas Quartas Eleições Presidenciais e Legislativas e Primeiras para as Assembleias Provinciais. Pelo seu significado e valor para o nosso Povo, nossa história e para construção do Estado de Direito Democrático, apelamos à participação massiva de todos os moçambicanos, com idade de votar, no recenseamento eleitoral em curso e a exercerem o seu direito cívico de votar no dia 28 de Outubro próximo.

Por isso, exortamos o Povo Moçambicano, do Rovuma ao Maputo e do Índico ao Zumbo a fazer destas eleições um momento de consolidação da Unidade Nacional, de promoção da cultura de Paz, de tolerância, e do respeito pelas instituições e a Lei e pela pluralidade política, abstendo-se, de forma inequívoca, de todas as formas de manifestação de violência e de perturbação à Ordem e Tranquilidade Públicas.

Agradecemos a Vossas Excelências, Senhores Deputados e, por vosso intermédio, a todo o Povo Moçambicano pela entrega resoluta na materialização da nossa Agenda Nacional de luta contra a pobreza.

Dentro de três dias, a Nação moçambicana, esta Pátria de Heróis, celebra 34 anos da Proclamação da Independência Nacional. Foi graças a esta independência que os moçambicanos puderam assumir a merecida responsabilidade de traçar o seu próprio destino. Estamos aqui hoje e a partir deste pódio, para com a honra e o privilégio que nos assistem anunciar, Excelências, que temos um Estado:

- que respeita a pluralidade política;
- amante da paz;
- em franco desenvolvimento;
- com estabilidade macroeconómica;
- com sentido de solidariedade nacional;

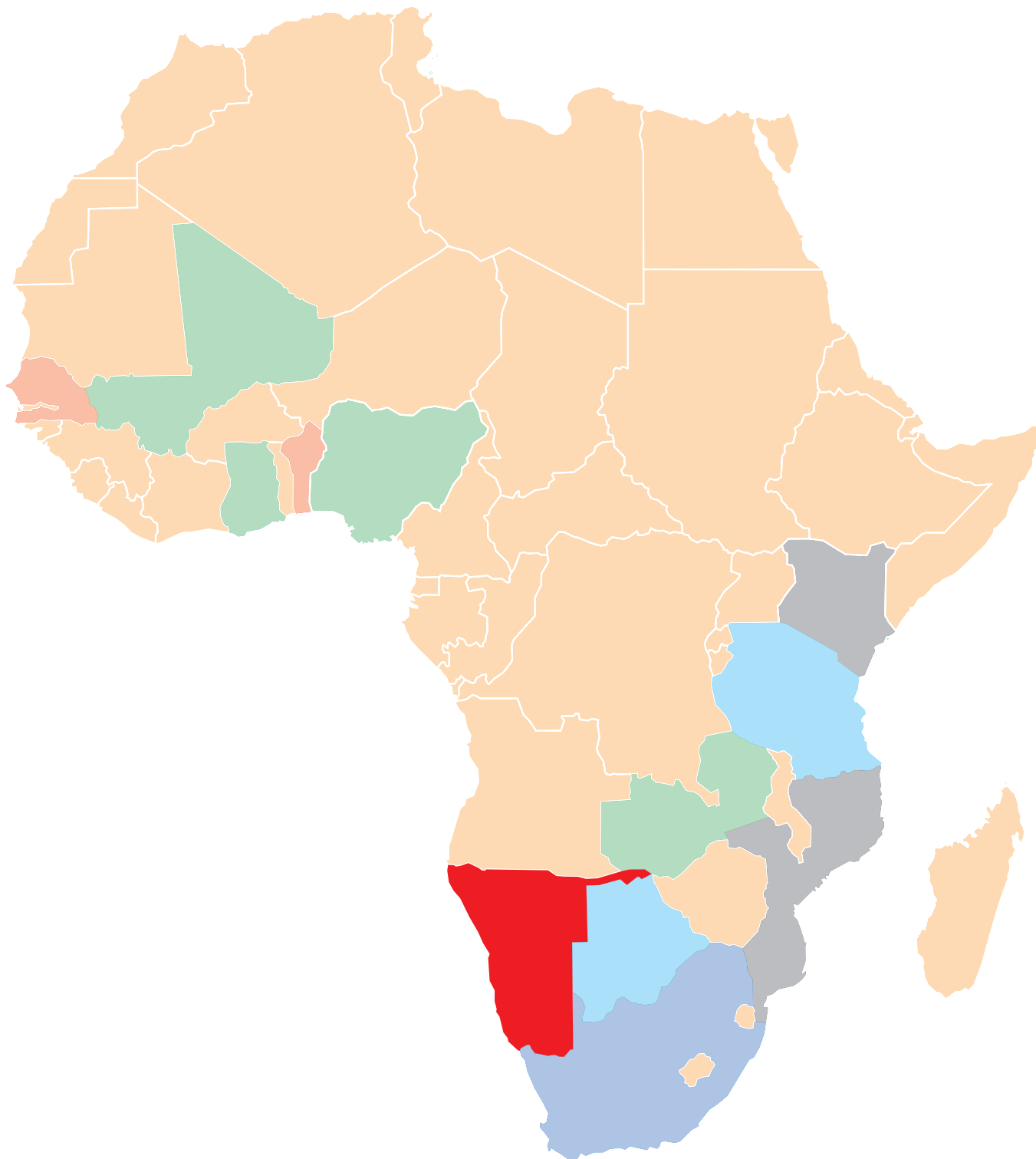
f. com prestígio internacional;

g. contribuinte para a paz e estabilidade da região e do mundo; e

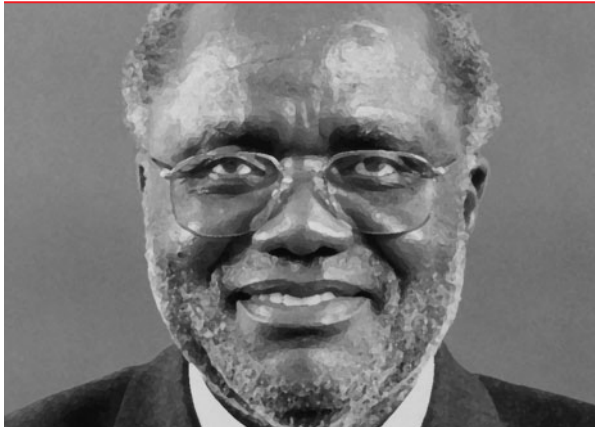
h. com visão clara do rumo a seguir na luta contra a pobreza e pelo nosso bem estar.

MUITO OBRIGADO, PELA VOSSA
ATENÇÃO

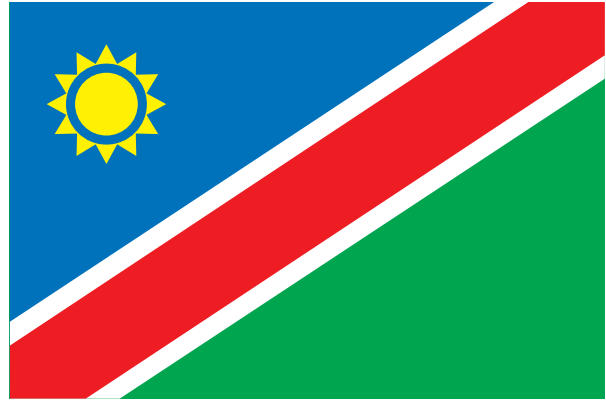
NAMIBIA



NAMIBIA



**State of the Nation Address by His
Excellency Hifikepunye Pohamba,
President of the Republic of Namibia
Windhoek, Namibia
April 15, 2009**



Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
Honourable Chairperson of the National
Council,

Your Excellency, Founding President and
Father of the Namibian Nation, Comrade
Dr. Sam Nujoma,

Right Honourable Prime Minister,

Your Honour, the Chief Justice,

Honourable Deputy Prime Minister,

Honourable Dr. Hage Geingob, First Prime
Minister,

Comrade Dr. Hendrik Witbooi, First Deputy
Prime Minister,

Mr. Kandy Nehova, First Chairperson of the
National Council,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic
Corps,

Distinguished Uniformed Officers,

Members of the Media,

Fellow Namibians:

I stand before this joint session of our Parliament to report on the State of the Nation, covering the 2008/2009 financial year. As per the requirements of the Namibian Constitution, I will focus my address on the policies and programmes of our South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) Party Government during the period under review and also provide insights into our future plans in the new financial year. This is in keeping with the values and ethos of accountability, transparency, and good governance to which we are fully committed.

A few weeks ago, the Namibian people commemorated our Nineteenth Anniversary of freedom and independence, a date on which we remember our rendezvous with history: a day

when we as a people took into our own hands the social, political, and economic destiny of our country. We remember the sacrifices made by the brave sons and daughters of our soil who gave their lives and shed their precious blood for our freedom and independence. Theirs was the utmost demonstration of patriotism, and we will forever remember and salute them for their selflessness and gallantry. The work that we have done and continue to do, and the progress that we have scored and continue to record, were made possible by their sacrifices.

THE ECONOMY AND GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

For Namibia, the period under review was a time of mixed blessings. The peace and stability that we enjoy have made it possible for our government to remain focused on the pressing issues of the day.

I have in mind the issues of economic growth, employment creation, the social and economic well-being of our people, and the development challenges that demand our attention in the areas of health, education, housing, training, and employment creation, as well as the provision of basic amenities such as water, electricity, and human security.

During this time of global recession, utmost in the minds of our people is the state of the national economy and the impact of the global economic crisis on our country. The Namibian economy is inextricably connected to the global economy through trade and investment. Deteriorating global demand for our products has hurt our mining industry, resulting in the closure of mines, the scaling back of operations, and loss of jobs.

Given the size of the domestic market, our government has made export promotion and the development of new markets a central component of the country's economic growth strategy. In this connection, our government is pursuing negotiations to secure preferential market access for our goods and services through bilateral, regional, and multilateral trade arrangements.

Some progress has been made in the negotiations for an Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union (EU). However, more work remains to be done. We will continue to engage with our partners, such as the EU, while insisting on and highlighting the tremendous strategic and economic consequences that such agreements can have on smaller economies such as Namibia.

Compared to other countries in the region, Namibia has been performing relatively well in terms of investment inflows. However, the level of foreign direct investment and domestic investment remain slow. Also, the number of jobs and the level of economic growth remain slow. We welcome the new investments and expansion by local companies in the construction, retail, property development, uranium, and tourism sectors. The livestock industry has also moved beyond the traditional export of deboned beef to include other value-added products.

It is encouraging to see ongoing investor confidence and interest in Namibia. The recent investment of N\$2.5 billion by German investors in Ohorongo Cement and the N\$2 billion Namundjebo Plaza Hotel development by Namibia's United Africa Group are some cases in point.

Memories of the major fluctuations in oil prices that were experienced last year are still fresh. Indeed, we remember the price increases for food and other commodities. The fluctuations depressed key economic sectors on which our growth is anchored. It also placed enormous pressure on many households, especially on the low income groups.

Our SWAPO Party Government has been seized with seeking ways to effectively deal with the negative impact of the global financial crisis on our economy. We started by introducing value added tax (VAT) exemption on certain essential basic food items. I have expressed my views that effective monitoring mechanisms are needed in order to ensure that VAT benefits of these measures do reach the consumers, who are the intended beneficiaries. With the fall in the price of oil and interest rates, I find it difficult to see any justification for the ever-increasing food prices.

The Bank of Namibia has responded to the crisis by keeping the interest rates unchanged, while our government has reduced the income tax for different wage categories. The tax threshold has also been raised to N\$40,000. I trust that collectively, as a nation, we can and will weather the storm.

I am happy to say that despite the global downturn, our economy has generally held steady. We expect a sustained pattern of robust domestic tax inflows as observed during the last three quarters.

Our government has successfully engaged our development cooperation partners with the goal of enhancing mutually beneficial relationships and building stronger partnerships. This has brought about many benefits for Namibia, such as support in the form of funding and technical assistance from various countries and organisations. I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to you. You have stood with us through thick and thin, even during these difficult times of the global economic crisis.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,

A sound labour relations environment is critical for the growth of our economy and the welfare of our workers. It is for this reason that our SWAPO Party Government modernized our labour legislation. The Labour Act is already facilitating speedier resolution of labour disputes.

I have noted the expansion of labour-related services, such as the opening of regional labour offices in different towns including Opuwo and Outapi in recent months. Similar offices will be opened at Rundu and Gobabis this year. We need to have accurate statistics on the extent of unemployment in the country. Our government will, therefore, introduce legislation to create a legal framework, institutions, and tools to help us achieve this objective.

The envisaged Employment Services Bill will provide for the establishment of an electronic national employment information system to: register job seekers, list job vacancies, match job seekers and prospective employers, identify skills

deficits, and provide information on enterprises, training, and bursary opportunities. Employers will be required, by law, to report all employment vacancies to the government. An Employment Creation Commission will be established to coordinate national employment creation initiatives.

We know that the unemployment situation in our country is worsened by skill deficits, which also handicap economic growth. Our government will, therefore, continue to facilitate and promote skills development through vocational training programmes and vocational counseling services.

Qualified vocational counselors are now stationed at regional labour offices to provide guidance to young people and help them to choose professions that match their competencies and aptitudes. These services will be provided free of charge to the public as part of our strategy to fight unemployment. Another programme aimed at helping our young people to secure a better future is the National Youth Credit Scheme. Hundreds of our youth have already received mentoring and training under this scheme in basic business management and other aspects. Many of them are now engaged in business activities.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,

The government's social grant programme provides a social safety net for vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, orphans and vulnerable children, and people with disabilities. Our SWAPO Party Government increased the grants from N\$370 to N\$450 last year. Currently, about 254,799 beneficiaries receive these benefits. Our government has also increased the funeral benefit of senior citizens from N\$2,000 last year to N\$2,200. I reiterate our commitment to improve these benefits because our SWAPO Party Government is fully aware that they are insufficient to meet the increasing needs of households.

We will continue to monitor the flood situation in the north and northeastern part of our country. Measures should be taken to ensure that all necessary support is rendered to our people.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,

For our government to succeed in achieving our national development objectives, we must plan thoroughly and meticulously. We must be able to measure the progress that we are making and also make adjustments where goals are not being met.

I am happy to say that the Third National Development Plan (NDP3) was successfully launched in November of last year, and the National Planning Commission is currently busy with an annual review of the implementation of the Plan. The review will track the performance of different implementing agencies with specific focus on the achievement of annual targets and the identification of constraints.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS)

As a government, we are constantly striving to combat the impact of poverty on our people.

We can do this best if we can reliably measure and analyse the poverty indicators. It is for this reason that a new poverty line indicator was introduced. It is based on the cost of basic needs approach and will guide our government to design effective measures to assist poor households. The 2008 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Progress Report has brought to light important insights about the realities of poverty levels in different communities in Namibia.

It indicates that poor and severely poor households make up around 28 percent of all households in the country. The good news is that Namibia has already achieved the target of halving the number of severely poor households in the country. Moreover, inequalities in income distribution have been reduced considerably, although the levels remain unacceptably high. We are working extra hard to pull more households out of poverty.

The focus is on our rural communities, including the San. Several anti-poverty projects were introduced to fight poverty among the San. These include a bread-making project at

Oshivelo; revolving small livestock projects at Tsumkwe, Bagani, Chetto, and Omega III, as well as craft kiosks.

Region specific action plans for food security and nutrition, which address cross-cutting issues of food security and poverty, were also launched in December of last year. San communities in identified regions will benefit from a project known as “Empowerment of the San Community for Household Food Security” under the Office of the Prime Minister.

Our SWAPO Party Government is seized with the reintegration of the veterans of the struggle for liberation into the socioeconomic mainstream of the Namibian society. Laws, regulations, and policies were formulated to achieve this goal. The Ministry of Veterans Affairs was established and the Veterans Act of 2008 was passed.

The Veterans Board, which will be responsible for administering the Veterans Fund and approval of veterans’ applications was inaugurated. The Veterans Act also makes provisions for the funding of economic projects for veterans to create job opportunities in different sectors. There is a ceiling of N\$250,000 per project. After these legislative and policy interventions, qualifying veterans will receive N\$2,000 per month. In addition to these measures, our government will also continue with the construction of houses for identified veterans.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,

The health status of our nation remains one of our SWAPO Party Government’s top priorities. In this regard, we have built hospitals, health centres, and clinics, especially in rural areas. Our people should stand together to confront and reverse the march of the deadly HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is devastating our communities. The National Policy on HIV/AIDS that I recently launched should be used to add momentum to our efforts to fight the pandemic.

We are concerned about the child mortality rates, which have shown an upward trend in recent years. This is compounded in part by the

HIV/AIDS pandemic and inadequate nutrition in low-income households. This threat must be addressed with all the force and resources that we can muster.

Indeed, it calls for the intensification of prevention programmes to stop the transmission of the virus from expectant mothers to their unborn babies. It also calls for the expansion of immunisation programmes to cover all children against childhood illnesses. Immunisation coverage currently stands at around 84 percent of all one-year-old children in Namibia. We are on course to achieve the MDG target of 100 percent immunisation coverage by 2012.

On our part, the government will continue to provide antiretroviral drugs to our infected citizens in all parts of our country. I call upon all stakeholders to work together in order to address this national problem. Our programme of upgrading and renovating public health facilities is continuing. The construction of a new laundry at Oshakati Hospital was completed in June of last year. Contractors are now busy with the construction of a new 40-bed private ward at that hospital. In addition, a tender for the construction of a tuberculosis (TB) ward, a new administration block, and a 43-bed pediatric ward has been advertised.

I should also mention that a tender for the construction of the main kitchen and dining hall has been awarded to contractors. The Onandjokwe Lutheran Medical Hospital is also receiving attention. A tender advertisement for the upgrading and extension of the hospital is expected to be awarded soon. Planning for the construction of a 60-bed hospital at Omuthiya in the Oshikoto Region is at an advanced stage.

In the Ohangwena Region, the construction of Eenhana Hospital Phase 2, which includes the construction of a 52-bed ward, was completed in October 2007.

Phase 3, which includes extension of the regional management team office block, mortuary, dental unit, and general and chemical stores, is currently underway. The Onambutu Clinic was constructed and completed in June of last year. The construction of a new clinic and staff

accommodation at Oshaango is in progress.

At Ongwa Health Centre, the construction of a new additional 8-bed ward and ablution facilities were completed in September of last year. In addition, Antiretroviral Therapy clinics are being constructed at Eenhana, Engela, and Okongo hospitals.

Our SWAPO Party Government is determined to improve our health infrastructure throughout the country so that we can render quality healthcare to our people. In addition to the facilities I have referred to, we carried out upgrading, renovation, and construction of health facilities in various parts of our country.

We carried out renovations and upgrading at the following intermediate and National Referral Hospitals: Katutura, Windhoek Central, Oshakati, and Rundu. We carried out renovations and upgrading at the following District Hospitals: Khorixas and Outjo in the Kunene Region, Tsandi in the Omusati Region, Katima Mulilo in the Caprivi Region, Keetmanshoop in the Karas Region, Okakarara in the Otjozondjupa Region, and Tsumeb in the Oshikoto Region.

We carried out renovations and upgrading at the following clinics: Bersig in the Kunene Region, Warmbad and Aus in the Karas Region, Ovivotto in the Otjozondjupa Region, Onambutu and Oshaango in the Ohangwena Region, Elombe and Okankolo Health Centre in the Oshikoto Region, Otjimbingwe in the Khomas Region, and Ongongo and Iilyateko in the Omusati Region.

Construction of mortuaries at Aminius Clinic and Okanguati Health Centre in the Omaheke and Kunene Regions respectively was also completed.

In addition, our SWAPO Party Government opened antiretroviral treatment clinics with the assistance of our social partners at the following places: Eenhana, Engela, and Okongo in the Ohangwena Region, Katutura Health Centre in the Khomas Region, Oshakati in the Oshana Region, Otjiwarongo in the Otjozondjupa Region, and Kuisebmond in the Erongo Region.

With a view to improving the provision of health services, the Ministry has acquired 195 vehicles, including outreach service vehicles and

sixteen ambulances. Development partners and the private sector have provided support in terms of renovations of hospitals, provision of linen and other materials, as well as the provision of outreach service vehicles and ambulances.

The health of Namibian mothers is paramount in the development of our country. We must work harder to improve the health of Namibian mothers by increasing antiretroviral treatment for those infected by HIV/AIDS while also ensuring that more and more births are attended by trained health personnel. This figure stands currently at 80 percent. We are on track to meet the 95 percent MDG target by 2012. The fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic has been intensified on many fronts, resulting in encouraging outcomes. As a result of the education campaign, the prevalence rate has dropped from 12 to 10 percent among the 15 to 19 years age group and from 20 to 16.4 percent among the 20 to 24 years age group.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services carried out a health and social services system review, looking at the successes and challenges in the Namibian public health sector since independence. As a result, a Health Strategic Plan for the period 2009 to 2013 was developed. Accelerated training of health professionals remains a key priority in addressing the shortage of qualified health personnel in our country. A total number of 381 students in health-related fields of study completed the training at the Ministry's Health Training Centers at the end of 2008. Meanwhile, a total of twenty-three Namibian medical doctors completed their degrees and are undergoing internships at Katutura and Windhoek Central Hospitals. I am also pleased to report that the pre-medical course at the University of Namibia (UNAM) is progressing well. In this regard, Namibia will soon be graduating its own medical doctors.

You will recall that prior to Namibia's independence, churches played a vital role in catering for the health needs of our nation. It is, therefore, important to formalise a cooperation agreement between our government and our major churches. I am pleased to report that the

Partnership Agreement in Health between the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the Anglican, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic Churches was signed in October of last year. In terms of the agreement, our government will give a 100 percent subsidy for salaries of health personnel and 85 percent for capital projects to church hospitals.

HOUSING

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,
Housing is one of the top four priorities of our SWAPO Party Government. The aim is to provide decent housing to our people. Hence, various programmes have been created. Following its restructuring and reorganisation during the past three years, the National Housing Enterprise (NHE) acquired close to 6,000 plots throughout the country at a combined value of N\$12.9 million. Out of that number, 1,234 plots have been serviced at the cost of about N\$66 million. The company also spent N\$194.3 million to finance homes, home improvements, and building loans. These measures are aimed at complimenting the Build Together Programme and Shack Dwellers Projects.

During the 2008/2009 financial year, NHE constructed 871 houses at an estimated cost of N\$150 million. It is also busy installing municipal infrastructure in different areas at a cost of N\$50 million.

This will yield 836 fully serviced plots. Construction of low-cost houses for San households at Okatuuo in the Omaheke Region has been completed, and dwellings were handed over to the beneficiaries by the Right Honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

Physical planning and surveying were completed in 2008/2009 at Divundu proper, Okalongo proper, Kalkrand, Aranos Extension 4, Gochas, and Bethanie. Koës, Aroab, Leonardville, Aranos Extension 5, Okalongo Extension 1, and Fransfontein will follow during the current financial year. We want to ensure that the bucket system becomes something of the

past. Thus, work is already underway to modernise sewerage systems at places such as Gibeon, Rehoboth, Stampriet, Kalkrand, Aroab, Koës, Tses, Bethanie, Berseba, and Kamanjab. The provision of services such as water, sewerage, and roads is also underway at Bukalo, Henties Bay, Rehoboth, Aussenker, Divundu, Katima-Mulilo, Nkurenkuru, Otjinene, Otuzemba, and Omuthiya Gwiipundi. The Trust Fund for Regional Development and Equity Provision implemented major projects to upgrade sewerage networks at Karibib, Ruacana, and Rundu.

The proclamation of new local authorities is progressing well. Otjinene is to be proclaimed as a town this year. Focus is now on the Caprivi Region where only one Local Authority exists. Omuthiya in the Oshikoto Region was proclaimed as a town in September of last year. The planning and surveying of Oranjemund Township have been finalized and the Ministry envisages finalizing the proclamation of the town this year. Divundu will also be proclaimed as a town soon.

In order to facilitate the smooth running of the traditional authority activities, the government decided to provide vehicles to all recognised traditional authorities. This move became necessary in light of the pending implementation of community courts by traditional authorities.

RURAL WATER SUPPLY

The Rural Water Supply Coverage Project is being implemented. The project entails the supply of clean, piped water to rural communities living in areas where the groundwater quality is too poor for human consumption. The construction of Phase 3 of Onambutu Water Pipeline Network covering 215 km and 81 water points in the Ohangwena Region was completed in September 2008.

Phase 4 of this project will cover a distance of 197 km and 94 water points. It will be completed in January of next year. The Tsandi South Project Phase 3, in the Otamanzi area, entails the construction of a 6 km power line, a water pump station, a 172 cubic meter reservoir, a 24 km bulk water pipeline and a 102 km rural water pipeline.

This project will be completed in June of this year. In June of last year, 189 community water points in the Otjozondjupa Region were transformed into 1,651 private customer water points.

EDUCATION

Since the attainment of independence, our SWAPO Party Government placed first priority on the education of our people. We believe that education is the answer to addressing poverty and to promoting a healthy nation. It is for this reason that we regard education as a priority above priorities. We will continue to put more financial and human resources in education. We are on course to achieve the MDG target of 99 percent enrollment at primary school level by 2012. Namibia has already achieved 92 percent enrollment.

Our efforts to provide greater access by our girl children to education have yielded good results in terms of the ratios of girls to boys in primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary education institutions. All indications are that we have exceeded gender parity at the tertiary education level.

Like in previous years, our SWAPO Party Government placed special emphasis on infrastructure development by building more classrooms and new schools, as well as on teacher training with a view to improving the quality of education. You will recall that in 2007, a big number of Grade 10 learners did not meet the entry requirements for Grade 11. These learners were absorbed within the education and training system. About 4,600 were readmitted to full-time Grade 10, while the remaining 9,000 opted to improve their grades on those subjects that they performed poorly in with the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL). A number of measures were taken to ensure that NAMCOL learners are not disadvantaged. These included additional classroom hours of teaching, as well as additional educational programmes on radio and television. I am pleased to inform you that as a result of these measures, NAMCOL learners performed much better than Grade 10 full-time learners.

The remaining Grade 10 learners were absorbed by vocational training centres. I look forward to even better results for Grade 10 and Grade 12 learners in the future so that Namibia can have a proud and educated nation under the SWAPO Party Government. Several schools were renovated, and others were upgraded, while new ones were built during the reporting period. Thirty schools were upgraded to offer secondary education, and new schools were built in the Khomas Region 2, catering for the primary and secondary education phases to cope with the continued influx of people to the capital.

During the reporting period, new classrooms, libraries, laboratories, administration blocks, teacher houses, and hostels were built in Caprivi, Erongo, Hardap, Karas, Kavango, Khomas, Kunene, Ohangwena, Omaheke, Omusati, Oshana, Oshikoto, and Otjozondjupa regions. In total, 467 classrooms, 18 libraries and laboratories, 28 administration blocks, and 38 teacher houses were built.

The provision of quality education to all our children is at the heart of the Education and Training Sector Improvement Program (ETSIP). Our government is fully committed to providing resources in order to accelerate its implementation. In fact, the proportion of government funding to ETSIP will increase significantly as a result of the additional resources outlined in the current budget. A new Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate (NSSC) qualification and examination was also introduced to replace the IGCSE and HIGCSE qualifications and examinations of the Cambridge International Examinations syndicate. The number of candidates increased from just under 36,000 in 2007 to more than 40,000. In Grade 10, more than 36,000 sat for examination in 2008.

Access to pre-primary education has direct bearing to the school readiness and academic performance of children at school. Funding has been made available for that purpose and to help those children with special education needs. Good nutrition plays an important part in pupils' ability to learn and, thus, to benefit from their education. Our SWAPO Party Government is,

therefore, increasing the coverage of the school feeding programme and improving the quality of the catering services. These changes will predominantly benefit poorer families, particularly those in rural areas.

The National Student Financial Assistance Fund is receiving extra money to enable it to extend access to tertiary education by our youth. To complement that, funding has been provided to both the University of Namibia and the Polytechnic of Namibia to enable them to provide better tuition to an increasing number of the country's youth. Our tertiary education institutions are growing and expanding. UNAM now has eight faculties and four academic centres. In addition to the main campus in Windhoek and four other campuses at Ogongo, Oshakati, Ongwediva, and Neudamm, there is a Centre for External Studies with nine Outreach Centres in different towns. During the period under review, UNAM added one new faculty member as part of the university. The School of Engineering was inaugurated at Ongwediva recently. The total number of students enrolled at UNAM now stands at 10,140 this year. Likewise, the Polytechnic of Namibia is also growing steadily. Enrolment numbers now stand at 10,000 students.

TOURISM

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Chairperson,

I now turn my attention to the main sector of our economy. Our government fully supports the strengthening of the tourism sector. We, therefore, welcome the opening of new tourism facilities such as the Sossus Dune Lodge and the International Tourism Access Facilities at the MataMata and Sendelingsdrift Border posts. Our government will continue to support the good efforts of Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR). Through the upgrading and establishment of tourism facilities, a number of jobs have been created for Namibian citizens.

Honourable Members may recall that according to the Tourism Satellite Account research released by the World Travel and Tourism

Council for the period 2009 to 2018, Namibia was projected to have the fastest growth in travel and tourism industry in the world. The tourism sector was projected to produce the second-highest projected growth in terms of contribution to gross domestic product (GDP). It is clear, therefore, that prior to the world economic recession, tourism was one of the fastest and largest employers in Namibia.

It is now becoming evident that tourism is weakening as financially-strained tourists from North America, Europe, and Asia find it expensive to visit our country. From the end of last year, international tourist arrivals into the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region have declined slightly. Against this background, our government must continue to adopt measures aimed at mitigating the effects of tourism decline on employment and revenue generation. We will continue to put special emphasis on community-based tourism by assisting conservancies to improve their infrastructure. In addition, NWR needs to be assisted in order to mitigate the impact of possible job losses. Moreover, measures must be put in place to ensure that tourism also benefits previously disadvantaged Namibians.

FISHERIES

The marine fisheries sector continues to make significant contributions to the national economy in terms of employment, export earnings, and contributions to our GDP. Fourteen thousand people are employed in the sector on a permanent basis. During the period under review, the sector attracted both local and international investments, resulting in the opening of new fish processing facilities such as the Pomona Factory at Lüderitz. Other welcome investments have been made in the modernization of fish processing and value addition at Walvis Bay.

We welcome the growth in the aquaculture subsector where government invested more than N\$62 million since 2003. Freshwater aquaculture now employs close to 700 people. Plans are underway to establish a fish feed plant at Onavivi

at the cost of N\$6 million. The plant will use local raw materials such as fish meal from our fishing industry and mahangu from the agricultural sector. I am aware that the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources and the National Youth Service have joined hands to deploy members of the National Youth Service at aquaculture projects around the country to receive training in fish farming. They will use these skills to teach communities to practice integrated crop and fish farming techniques.

In October 2008, I inaugurated Phase 1 of the Kamutjonga Inland Fisheries Institute, which was built at the cost of N\$28 million. It is designed as a centre of excellence for Namibia and the entire SADC Region. Phase 2 will continue during the current financial year. Our government is continuing to implement practical measures to conserve our marine resources. In this light, the total allowable catch is being allocated conservatively, taking into account the observed biomass and research statistics. This is part of our commitment to utilise our natural resources in a sustainable manner for the benefit of future generations.

AGRICULTURE & FOOD PRODUCTION

The revised Green Scheme Policy was recently approved by Cabinet. It will form the basis for expanding crop production under irrigation. An amount of N\$55 million was allocated to the policy and utilised to construct infrastructure such as irrigation systems and houses for small-scale farmers at the Ndonga Linena, Shadikongoro, and Vungu Vungu agricultural projects.

In addition, Etunda Agricultural Project will be expanded by developing Phases 5-8. Agricultural projects will be expanded to other parts of the country, such as the Caprivi Region where rice growing trials are being developed at Kalimbeza Rice Project. We encourage public-private partnership projects to boost food production. I can mention that such projects are currently operational in places such as Musese and Shitemo Irrigation Schemes in the Kavango Region.

In the south, the Hardap Research Station was converted to small-scale farmers' plots for commercial crop production. The implementation of the Green Scheme Programme is hampered by a shortage of engineers and other experts. Plans are in place to address this shortage by approaching our development cooperation partners to provide technical assistance. Our government has constructed silos in the grain producing regions at the cost of N\$15 million.

The aim is to encourage food production in communal areas. Two silos were constructed at Okongo and Omuthiya respectively. The silos for Rundu have also been completed. Four silos were constructed at Katima Mulilo. The silos for Tsandi have been budgeted for in the current fiscal year.

Under the Programme of Support to Dry-land Crop Production, our government provided fertilisers and improved seeds and ploughing services to farmers at subsidised rates in the six crop-growing regions of Caprivi, Kavango, Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana, and Oshikoto. An amount of N\$25 million was spent to implement this programme. Floods and abnormal rains hampered the effective implementation of the programme during the 2008/09 cropping season. I call upon the Ministry of Agriculture, Water, and Forestry to ensure that information on these schemes reaches our people so that they can benefit from them.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,

We must also strengthen measures to improve yields by our livestock farmers. The Eastern Caprivi Region has experienced outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease since November 2007. The recent outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in the Kavango region disrupted international marketing of livestock from the Northern Communal Areas. The cabinet directed the line ministry to consult with local traditional authorities and councillors in Mukwe and Ndiyona constituencies to erect a temporary barrier in the area to restrict the movement of livestock to uninfected areas and to facilitate the vaccination and tagging of animals in the affected constituencies.

Quarantine farms at Omutambo-WoMawe, Oshivelo, Okongo, Mangetti, Kopano, and Katima Mulilo have been upgraded through the project Animal Health Improvement and Marketing in the Northern Communal Areas. The ultimate aim of this project is to achieve the foot-and-mouth disease-free status for the Northern Communal Areas. In addition, our SWAPO Party Government has erected and maintains auction pens, thereby assisting communal farmers with the marketing of their livestock.

Last year, our government provided N\$100 million to enable Agribank to reduce interest rates on a wide range of products so as to ensure and maintain affordability of these products by the farmers during the global economic crisis. Interest rates on the National Agricultural Credit Program were reduced to 4 percent. In addition, Agribank introduced the loan consolidation facility to provide further relief to farmers by consolidating several existing loans into one facility at weighted interest rates over a period of between 10 to 25 years.

Also introduced during 2008 was the Ekwatho Meatco scheme to assist farmers to increase marketing of weaners to the Meatco abattoirs. This will create more jobs and reduce the export of livestock on the hoof. Since the inception of the scheme in November 2008, Agribank has granted nearly N\$15 million to Affirmative Action Loan Scheme farmers for the raising of weaners.

Agribank also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement valued at N\$20 million annually to establish the Post Resettlement Support Fund. The Fund will be administered by Agribank to enable resettled farmers to access affordable financing in order to improve and maximise agricultural productivity. The loans will be offered to resettled farmers at affordable interest rates of 4 percent in order to stimulate productivity, enhance the living standards of the resettled farmers, and promote economic development of our nation.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,

The development, expansion, and mainte-

nance of our physical infrastructure is one of the cornerstones of our national development strategy. Many projects were carried out to expand, repair, and maintain our roads, bridges, electricity networks, communication lines, and other vital infrastructure. This is important for a number of reasons.

First, we must continue to invest in our infrastructure in order to achieve our strategic development goals, and second, we must act quickly to repair the damage caused by floodwaters in northern and northeastern Namibia.

An amount of more than N\$720 million was invested in road maintenance programmes during the period under review. This includes the resealing of paved roads, routine maintenance, special maintenance of bridges, maintenance of road reserves and road signs, re-gravelling, re-compaction, and blading of gravel roads.

On October 14th of last year, the Cabinet approved an amount of N\$45 million from the Contingency Fund to repair the road infrastructure damaged by floods in the northern and northeastern regions of the country. The roads in question include the road between Okalongo and Outapi, the road to Onheleiwa, the road between MR111 to Onaanda, the road between Ondangwa and Onakamwandi, and the road between Ondangwa and Ohalushu.

Other roads and bridges under the flood repair programme are the Uukwiyu-Omukandu road, Oshakati-Ompundja road, Oshakati-Endola road, Ogongo-Olutsiidhi road, and the Ongwediva bridge. Due to the exceptionally high floods this year, most of these roads have again been washed away.

The Regional Roads Master Plans for Oshikoto, Oshana, Omusati, Ohangwena, and Kavango were revised. The feasibility study for the improvement of the Otavi-Tsumeb road was completed in September of last year. The government is studying the possibility of tarring the Swakopmund-Henties Bay-Kamanjab road. The tarring of the road between Kamanjab and Omakange, covering a distance of 104 km, was completed last year at the cost of N\$178 million.

Also, the rehabilitation of the road between Okahandja and Karibib to the tune of N\$305

million, which started in February of last year, is progressing well. The tarring of the road between Rosh Pinah and the Sendelingsdrif turn-off commenced in January of last year and is expected to be completed in May of this year. Work has also started on Phase 1 of the tarring of the road between Tsumeb and Katwitwi at the border with Angola at the cost of N\$800 million. Other projects include: Gobabis to Otjinene road via Drimiopsis at a cost of N\$600 million; widening of Divundu Bridge at the cost of N\$44 million; Omakange to Okahao road at a cost of N\$345 million; and Oshikuku to Okalongo road.

Labour-based road construction projects have been completed or are also continuing in different parts of the country. These include: Ngoma to Muyako; Kongola to the Zambian border; Katima Mulilo to Kopano Quarantine facility; and Ngoma to Nakobolelwa.

A feasibility study will be conducted to construct a bridge connecting Impalila Island to Zambia and Botswana as part of the Kazungula Bridge. Other labour works construction projects include: Ompundja to Eheke gravel road; Ekamba to Onkani road; Tondoro to Kamupupu road; Rupara-Muveve-Gcangcu road; Liselo-Linyanti-Singalamwe bitumen road; and the road to Mangetti West Quarantine Camp.

ENERGY AND POWER

The provision of reliable energy is crucial for our economy. It is for this reason that our SWAPO Party Government is pursuing different options to secure a reliable supply of electricity for the country. More than N\$350 million has been invested in electrifying rural communities in all regions of the country since the programme started.

The hydro-power option is also of strategic importance for the country. The Namibia-Angola Permanent Joint Technical Commission has appointed the Cunene Consortium to conduct an updated techno-economic study on the Baynes Hydropower Option. It submitted a Draft Phase 1 Report in January of this year.

Our government has engaged NamPower to investigate the possibility of developing a

small-scale hydropower plant along the Orange River. Work has started on the construction of the Caprivi Link, from Katima Mulilo to Otjiwarongo. The line will connect Namibia's power grid to Zambia and Zimbabwe, making it possible for a more direct trade in electricity. In order to boost capacity, NamPower is adding a fourth unit at the Ruacana Hydro Power Plant. It will add 80 megawatts more to the existing capacity of 249 megawatts.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,

As Honourable Members are aware, this year we will hold Presidential and National Assembly elections. The Electoral Commission of Namibia (ECN) is making good progress in preparing for these elections.

The ECN has initiated a comprehensive review of the Electoral Act of 1992, resulting in the drafting of the Electoral Amendment Bill. The draft of the amendment bill will be submitted to the Ministry of Regional and Local Government, Housing, and Rural Development to take the process further.

I hope that Honourable Members will expedite the passing of this bill in time for enactment into law before the forthcoming national elections. No stone should be left unturned to ensure that all persons who could not be registered during the continuous voters' registration exercise are registered during a comprehensive nationwide supplementary registration of voters in September of this year. I also urge all citizens who did not find time to register and those who will turn eighteen years old by or before September to register.

SECURITY, LAW, AND ORDER

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,

It is an established fact that democracy and economic development can only be sustained through the security of the nation. Therefore, security is a prerequisite for economic growth, peace, and stability. Lack of security discourages investors from investing in societies where economic returns are uncertain. Namibia is not insu-

lated from the spillovers from conflicts elsewhere in the world.

Against this background, we have provided funding to enhance the effectiveness of our uniformed forces. Namibia has an obligation to contribute to international peace, security, and stability. It is for this reason that defense spending has been increased to meet our national and international obligations. Our uniformed personnel need modern equipment in order to carry out their duties effectively. I commend our men and women in uniform for making Namibia proud in peacekeeping operations abroad as well as the maintenance of law and order here at home.

As I have already pointed out, a strong criminal justice system is a critical factor in a democratic state based on the rule of law and democracy. In this regard, specific steps were taken to address the backlog of cases on our court roll, including the recruitment of additional magistrates and the creation of additional posts for judges. The reporting period also saw the opening of the High Court of Namibia at Oshakati, the completion of a new court building at Khorixas, and the commencement of the construction of a new court building at Tsumkwe. The Ministry of Justice has rolled out the Namibian Court Information System to Magistrates' Offices in Windhoek, Swakopmund, Usakos, Karibib, Omaruru, and Walvis Bay. It will soon be rolled out to other Magistrates Courts countrywide.

Namibia has acceded to and ratified multilateral international instruments such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocols; the United Nations, African Union, and SADC Conventions and Protocols against Corruption; SADC Protocol on Extradition; and most recently the United Nations Convention against the Illicit Trafficking in Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. We have done this to join hands with other countries in combating transnational organised crime. Furthermore, Namibia has entered into bilateral extradition and mutual legal assistance treaties with many countries to enhance effective administration of justice.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,

We are committed to combating crime and to ensuring that our citizens live in safety. That is why a full-fledged Ministry of Safety and Security was established. During the 2008/2009 financial year, our government allocated an amount of N\$135 million to the police to address the problem of transport. To date, 705 vehicles have been acquired. These vehicles were distributed to police stations around the country and various specialized units of the police force. Our government has also established an Air Wing within the Namibian Police Force. It currently operates with one Squirrel helicopter. In addition to fighting crime, the helicopter has been used to assist with the rescue of flood victims.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,

After the achievement of independence, our SWAPO Party Government started with the process of nation-building to mould a new society based on the pillars of democratic governance and respect for human rights as enshrined in the Namibian Constitution. We are proud that our people have internalised these democratic values that have enabled our country to remain stable both socially and economically. As this is an election year, I call upon all Namibians to ensure that all our laws are respected. We should ensure that election campaigns and other political activities are conducted in a peaceful atmosphere. Political support should only be gained through the power of persuasion. Provocative acts that could incite violence should be avoided at all cost.

Our common aims should be the holding of credible, peaceful, free, and fair elections. I, therefore, call upon all our people to join hands and work together to build a better society: a country where citizens preoccupy themselves with constructive and productive endeavours aimed at nation-building and enhancing the policy of National Reconciliation. These are the ideals for which our heroes and heroines fought and died. They must be ideals that we as Namibians should promote and live for!

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,

Through this statement, I have sought to demonstrate the practical steps taken by our SWAPO Party Government to spread the benefits of social and economic development to all corners of Namibia. I believe that it is possible to mobilize all our citizens—men, women, workers, peasants, urban dwellers, boys, and girls—to contribute in their unique ways to the development of their Motherland.

As a nation, we must take pride in advocating the motto of “ONE NAMIBIA, ONE NATION.” We take pride in advocating the principle of national reconciliation. We take pride in promoting peace, security, stability, and tolerance in our country.

We must vehemently reject tribalism, regionalism, ethnicity, racism, sexism, and nepotism with the contempt they deserve. Let us all embrace what is good and noble. Let us all embrace the patriotic spirit of Hendrick Witbooi, Samuel Maharero, Kahimemwa Nguvauva, Mandume ya Ndemufayo, Jacob Morenga, Nehale Iya Mpingana, and Ipumbu ya Tshilongo to guide us toward the future as we strive to make Namibia a better place for all and to reach our chosen destination: the destination of economic prosperity, the destination of poverty eradication, the destination of education for all, the destination of health for all, the destination of infrastructure development, the attainment of Vision 2030.

We must always remember that the journey to our final destination was made possible by our heroes and heroines. Their blood waters our freedom.

Honourable Speaker,
Honourable Chairperson,

We start the new financial year with renewed commitment to the achievement of our national priorities. The Honourable Members of this August House have been scrutinizing and debating the 2009/2010 Appropriation Bill for the past few weeks. I am pleased that overall the bill has received the support of the majority of the

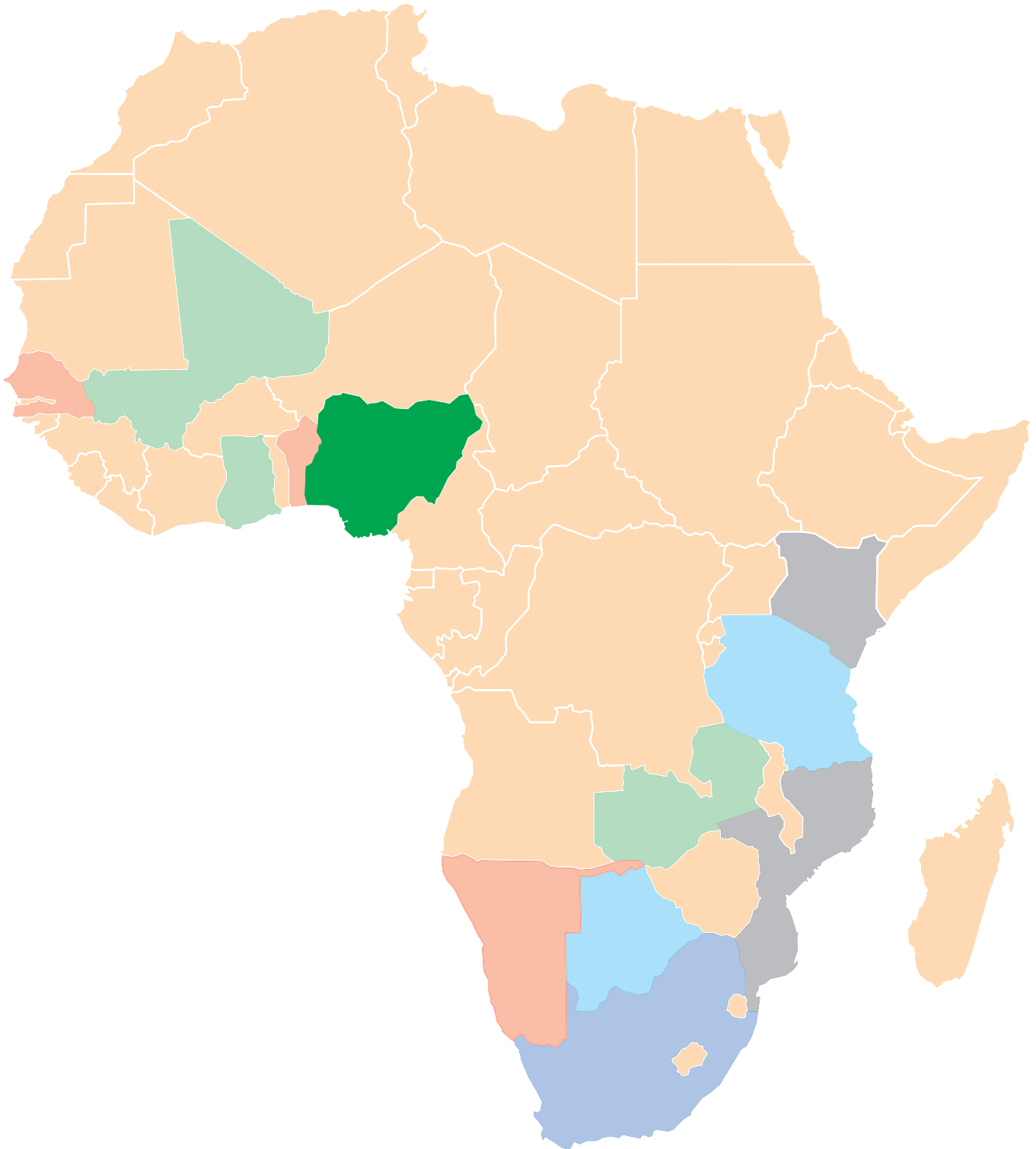
Honourable Members. I am also pleased that, where warranted, genuine criticisms have been raised with the view to improve. The Appropriation Bill is a planning tool for the execution of government plans over a specific period. While I have highlighted some of the major intended plans of our SWAPO Party Government in the new financial year and beyond, the Appropriation Bill provides full details of government expenditure in the next twelve months.

As we look back at the period under review, we are encouraged by the successes that have been recorded. At the same time, we are reminded of the improvements that we must make in order to serve more people, reach more communities, and improve the living conditions of those Namibians who live in difficult conditions. The lessons of the past have spurred us to plan better and work smarter. We are confident that we will do better, achieve more, and improve the performance of the public service in the new financial year and in the future.

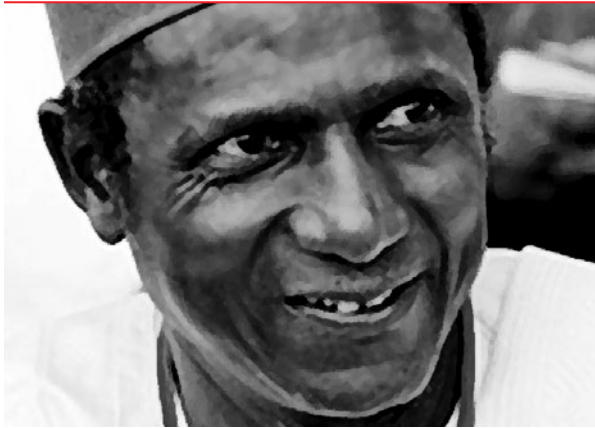
Namibia must always be a winning nation. Namibia must continue to walk tall among the community of free nations. Namibia must be a country of equal opportunities to every citizen. Namibia must be a country of hope and pride for the current and future generations.

Long live the Republic of Namibia!

I thank you.



NIGERIA



**Speech by His Excellency
Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, President of
the Republic of Nigeria
National Independence Day
Abuja, Nigeria
October 1, 2009**



Fellow Nigerians,

As we mark Nigeria's Forty-ninth year of nationhood, this day offers us an opportunity for celebration, reflection, and rededication. It is a celebration of that historic day when we joined the league of free nations, a reflection on how far we still have to go to give full meaning to our freedom, and the dedication we must continue to put forth for the actualization of the nation's dream of becoming one of the world's twenty largest economies by the year 2020.

The promise of independence is yet to be fully realised. This, however, does not diminish the value of freedom and the eternal significance of the sacrifice of those who suffered to make us free. Rather than become another day of self-flagellation, today should be a forceful reminder of the promise yet to be fulfilled, of the dream deferred for too long, and of the work that is still outstanding.

I will submit that the necessary work of repositioning Nigeria has commenced apace, and the overarching task should be focusing on the twin challenges of enthroning democracy and achieving sustainable development.

Fellow Nigerians,

On this day and in the spirit of rededication, we renew our commitment to confronting the challenges of critical infrastructure, the Niger Delta, food security, security of lives and property, human capital development, land tenure, and wealth creation.

We remain confident that with the massive investments we have made in the last two years in the expansion and strengthening of our gener-

ation's transmission and distribution capacities and capabilities of electricity, we shall succeed in our commitment to provide stable electricity on a sustainable basis. We will attain our goal of generating 6000 MW by December 2009.

We remain equally committed to providing Nigeria an effective and efficient intermodal transportation system. With such a network, movement of goods and services around our vast country would become faster, more efficient, and better able to support the realization of the great potentials that abound in our economy. A major testament of our drive to expand and link our transportation system is the commencement of the dredging of the lower River Niger, forty-three years after the idea was first mooted. This project covers 572 km across eight states; when completed, it will ensure year-round navigation of the lower River Niger. In addition, we are fast-tracking the delivery of railway projects with the expected supply of new and refurbished locomotives by January of next year in anticipation of successful rehabilitation and completion of existing and new rail tracks.

We have also taken steps to increase the tempo of the implementation of the Zonal Road Intervention Programme, which is handling, among other things, the thirty-four road projects going on simultaneously around the country. This is coupled with the revitalization of the real sector of the economy, especially agriculture, through value chain infrastructure development, which has commenced in earnest.

Fellow Nigerians,

Over the years, the Niger Delta has posed major developmental and environmental challenges to our nation. These challenges have adversely affected our national economy. The new Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, in concert with the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), is charting a meaningful cause in reversing the infrastructure and development deficit as a demonstration of our commitment to the holistic resolution of the crisis in the area.

In consolidating the gains of these initiatives, and with a view of engendering lasting peace in

the area, we proclaimed a general amnesty and granted unconditional pardon to all those who had taken up arms as a way of drawing attention to the plight of the people of the Niger Delta. Some remarkable progress has been made and it is our hope that all militants would avail themselves of this amnesty, which expires on Sunday, October 4, 2009.

Fellow Nigerians,

The last twelve months have been particularly tumultuous in the global economy, and our nation could not have been immune to the impact. However, the reform programmes that we embarked upon helped to mitigate the adverse consequences. In spite of the dip in oil prices and the challenges of the Niger Delta, the level of our external reserves has remained high and net outflow significantly moderated. In the last quarter of 2008, the Naira suffered a very sharp depreciation, which continued into the early part of this year. Normalcy has now been restored with the convergence in rates in our foreign exchange markets. Similarly, headline inflation has declined steadily from 15 percent at the end of 2008 to 11 percent at the end of August 2009.

The recent reforms embarked upon by the Central Bank of Nigeria are part of the holistic measures aimed ultimately at ensuring requisite macroeconomic stability. The goal is to have banks and financial institutions that can be effective partners with government in delivering economic growth. By enforcing full disclosure, and entrenching sound corporate governance and risk management principles, Nigeria would be on the way to entrenching a financial system that inspires the confidence of the international community.

As the world begins to recover from the global recession, the emerging signs of recovery in our national economy are increasingly encouraging. Our real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth is projected at 5 percent in 2009 and non-oil GDP growth is expected to remain robust at 6.3 percent. Furthermore, the recovery of crude oil prices and improved oil and gas output are expected to enhance our national fiscal and foreign exchange balances.

Fellow Nigerians,

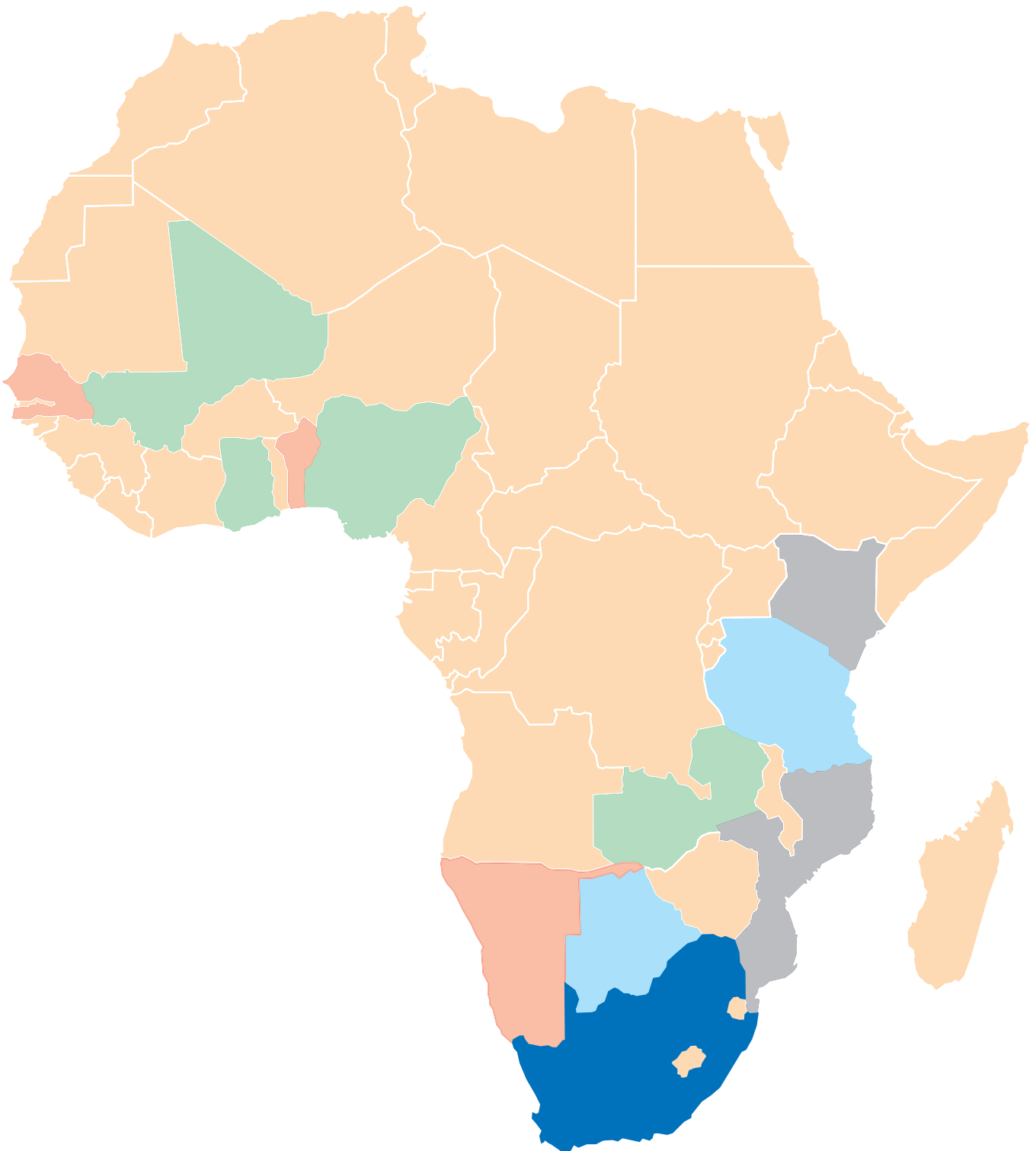
Our administration places the highest possible premium on education and human capital development. I would, at this point, like to register the federal government's grave concern over the continuing strike action embarked upon by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). Concerted efforts are being exerted to ensure the resolution of the issues so as to allow our children to return to the campuses and resume their studies.

My fellow countrymen and women, our nation is today faced with a number of daunting challenges. However, in the face of all these challenges, our resolve and abiding faith must remain unshaken. We must see today's challenges as veritable opportunities waiting to be translated into stepping stones to an assured destiny of peace, progress, and prosperity for our common posterity.

I wish you a Happy Forty-ninth Independence Anniversary.

May God continue to bless Nigeria.

SOUTH AFRICA



SOUTH AFRICA



**State of the Nation Address by His
Excellency Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma,
President of the Republic of South
Africa at the Joint Sitting of
Parliament
Cape Town, South Africa
June 3, 2009**



Honourable Speaker,
Chairperson of the National Council of
Provinces (NCOP),
Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and
Deputy Chairperson of the NCOP,
Deputy President of the Republic, Kgalema
Motlanthe,
Former President of the Republic, Thabo Mbeki,
Our icon, the First President of a democratic
South Africa, Isithwalandwe Nelson Rolihlahla
Mandela,
Former Deputy Presidents,
Distinguished Premiers and Speakers of our
Provinces,
Esteemed Members of the Judiciary;
Chairperson of the South Africa Local
Government Association (SALGA), mayors and
leaders in our system of local government,
Chairperson of the National House of
Traditional Leaders and our honoured traditional
leaders,
Heads of Chapter 9 Institutions,
Governor of the Reserve Bank,
Religious leaders,
Directors-General and other leaders of the
public service,
President of the Pan African Parliament,
Honourable Idriss Ende Moussa,
Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High
Commissioners,
Distinguished guests, comrades, and friends,
Fellow South Africans,
Dumelang, Abusheni, Molweni,
On April 22, millions of South Africans went out
to cast their votes. They exercised their demo-
cratic right that was spurred on by the desire to

change their lives for the better. In their overwhelming numbers, they confirmed that working together we can do more to fight poverty and build a better life for all. They were encouraged by the vision of an inclusive society, a South Africa that belongs to all, a nation united in its diversity, a people working together for the greater good of all. We are humbled by this decisive electoral mandate given by the people of our country, who have chosen their government in a most convincing manner.

Honourable Members,

Over the past few years our nation has gone through very challenging times. It is thanks to the fact that we have a strong and fully functional constitutional democratic system, with solid institutions, that we overcame these difficulties smoothly and with dignity.

Today's occasion is a celebration of what makes this democracy work. It is also a celebration of our culture of continuity and collective responsibility. This is evidenced by the presence here of our icon Madiba, who laid the foundation for the country's achievements, and that of former President Thabo Mbeki, who built on that foundation. The continuity is also evident in the fact that former President Kgalema Motlanthe is now the Deputy President of the Republic, after a seamless transition, making us a unique country in many respects.

Fellow South Africans,

As you would be aware, the fight against poverty remains the cornerstone of our government's focus. On May 9, during the Presidential inauguration, we made a commitment to our people and the world that:

"For as long as there are South Africans who die from preventable disease; for as long as there are workers who struggle to feed their families and who battle to find work; for as long as there are communities without clean water, decent shelter, or proper sanitation; for as long as there are rural dwellers unable to make a decent living

from the land on which they live; for as long as there are women who are subjected to discrimination, exploitation, or abuse; for as long as there are children who do not have the means nor the opportunity to receive a decent education; we shall not rest, and we dare not falter in our drive to eradicate poverty."

In pursuit of these goals, our government has identified ten priority areas, which form part of our *Medium Term Strategic Framework for 2009 to 2014*. The programme is being introduced under difficult economic conditions. The past year has seen the global economy enter a period of crisis unprecedented in recent decades.

While South Africa has not been affected to the extent that a number of other countries have, its effects are now being clearly seen in our economy. We have entered a recession. It is more important now than ever that we work in partnership on a common programme to respond to this crisis.

We take as our starting point the framework for South Africa's response to the international economic crisis, concluded by government, labour, and business in February this year. We must act now to minimise the impact of this downturn on those most vulnerable.

We have begun to act to reduce job losses. There is an agreement in principle between government and the social partners on the introduction of a training layoff. Workers who would ordinarily be facing retrenchment due to economic difficulty would be kept in employment for a period of time and re-skilled.

Discussion on the practical detail is continuing between the social partners and the institutions that would be affected by such an initiative, including the Sector Education and Training Authorities. We will support the work of the Commission for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) to assist employers and workers find alternatives to retrenchments through the relevant legal process. To date, CCMA commissioners have saved over 4000 jobs through facilitation processes, and

provided ongoing advice and support to retrenched workers.

The Industrial Development Corporation has developed a programme to fund companies in distress. We will also ensure that government buys more goods and services locally, without undermining our global competitiveness or pushing up costs beyond acceptable levels.

Building on the successes of our industrial policy interventions, a scaled up Industrial Policy Action Plan will be developed. The lead sectors already identified are automobile, chemicals, metal fabrication, tourism, clothing, textiles, and forestry. In addition, attention will also be paid to services, light manufacturing, and construction among others in the quest to create decent jobs.

As part of Phase Two of the Expanded Public Works Programme, the Community Work Programme will be fast-tracked. It offers a minimum level of regular work to those who need it, while improving the quality of life in communities.

The economic downturn will affect the pace at which our country is able to address the social and economic challenges it faces. But it will not alter the direction of our development. The policy priorities that we have identified, and the plans that we placed before the electorate, remain at the core of the programme of this government.

Laat ons mekaar se hande vat, en saam oplossings vind in die gees van n Suid Afrikaanse gemeenskap. Die tyd het gekom om harder te werk. Ons regering gaan vorentoe kyk, nie agtertoe nie!

The steps outlined in our Medium Term Strategic Framework had to take into account the constraints posed by the economic crisis. The downturn should not cause us to change these plans. Instead, it should urge us to implement these with speed and determination.

The Framework focuses on ten priorities. We make a commitment that working together we will speed up economic growth and transform the economy to create decent work and sustainable livelihoods. We will introduce a massive programme to build economic and social infrastructure. We will develop and implement a comprehensive rural development strategy linked to land

and agrarian reform and food security. We will strengthen the skills and human resource base. We will improve the health profile of all South Africans. Working together with all South Africans, we will intensify the fight against crime and corruption. We will build cohesive, caring, and sustainable communities. Working with Africa and the rest of the world, we will pursue African advancement and enhanced international cooperation. We will ensure sustainable resource management and use. And, working with the people and supported by our public servants, we will build a developmental state, improve public services, and strengthen democratic institutions.

It is my pleasure and honour to highlight the key elements of our programme of action. The creation of decent work will be at the centre of our economic policies and will influence our investment attraction and job-creation initiatives.

In line with our undertakings, we have to forge ahead to promote a more inclusive economy. In this regard, we will utilise state levers such as procurement, licensing, and financial support to assist small-medium enterprises as well as to promote the implementation of broad-based Black Economic Empowerment and affirmative action policies. The implementation will be done in recognition of the need to correct the imbalances of the past. The transformation will be undertaken in support of women, youth, and people with disabilities.

We will reduce the regulatory burden on small businesses. The matter of being stifled by regulations has been raised by the sector several times. In another intervention to create an enabling environment for investment, government will move toward a single integrated business registration system. This will improve customer service and reduce the cost of doing business in South Africa.

Another important element of our drive to create job opportunities is the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). The initial target of one million jobs has been achieved. The second phase of the programme aims to create about four million job opportunities by 2014.

Between now and December 2009, we plan to create about 500,000 job opportunities. While

creating an environment for jobs and business opportunities, government recognises that some citizens will continue to require state social assistance. Social grants remain the most effective form of poverty alleviation. As of March 31, 2009, more than 13 million people received social grants, and more than 8 million of them are children.

We are mindful of the need to link the social grants to jobs or economic activity in order to encourage self-reliance amongst the able-bodied.

Most importantly during this period, neighbours should assist each other.

Jwale ke nako yakopano. Are thusaneng jwale ka baahisane. Are dumalaneng bore ho sebane le ngwana ya tla robalang ka tlala hobane batswadi bahae bafeletswe ke mosebetsi. Hare ka kopana ra sebetsa kaofela re ka etsa ho feta mo.

Distinguished Guests,

As part of the second strategic priority, we will continue with our programme to build economic and social infrastructure. The newly-formed Infrastructure Development Cluster of government will ensure that the planned R787 billion infrastructure expenditure as provided for in the budget earlier this year is properly planned for and executed. This funding includes allocations for the school building programme, public transport including the bus rapid transit system, housing, water, and sanitation.

One of the biggest infrastructure investment projects is in the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup. We have, as government and the nation at large, pledged that the World Cup will leave a proud legacy from which our children and our communities will benefit for many years to come.

We are on track to meet all our obligations and are determined to give the world the best World Cup ever. We are putting all systems in place to make the Confederations Cup, which kicks off on June 14, a huge success.

In April of this year, I gave an undertaking to the taxi industry leadership to defer negotiations relating to the operation of the Bus Integrated Rapid Transit (BRT) system until after the elections. We undertook to allow more time to deal

properly with the concerns of the industry. On June 11, the Minister of Transport will resume discussions with the industry. The meeting will kick-start a series of engagements with the stakeholders affected by the BRT system. We are confident that unresolved issues will be dealt with to the satisfaction of all parties. This will include the important issue of how all stakeholders will benefit from the initiative.

Honourable Members,

Another development that should boost the World Cup is the roll-out of the digital broadcasting infrastructure and signal distribution transmitters. Overall, we will ensure that the cost of telecommunications is reduced through the projects underway to expand broadband capacity. We have to ensure that we do not leave rural areas behind in these exciting developments.

As part of our social infrastructure development, we will provide suitably located and affordable housing and decent human settlements. We will proceed from the understanding that human settlement is not just about building houses; it is about transforming our cities and towns and building cohesive, sustainable, and caring communities with closer access to work and social amenities, including sports and recreation facilities.

In this spirit, we will work with Parliament to speed up the processing of the Land Use Management Bill. Working together with our people in the rural areas, we will ensure a comprehensive rural development strategy linked to land and agrarian reform and food security, as our third priority.

I would like to use this opportunity to extend our condolences to the family of the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Dirk du Toit, who passed away this week. His contribution will be sorely missed.

Abantu basemakhaya nabo banelungelo lokuba nogesi namanzi, izindlu zangasese ezigijima amanzi, imigwaqo, izindawo zokuqeda isizungu nezemidlalo kanye nezindawo zokuthenga eziphucukile njengasemadolobheni. Nabo banelungelo lokusizwa kwezolimo ukuze bazitshalele imifino nokunye, bafuye nemfuyo bakwazi ukuziphilisa.

Sizimisele ukuwuqala lomkbankaso wokwakha izingqalasizinda ezindaweni zasemakhaya. Uma sibambisene nezakhamizi, amakhosi, amakhansela nezinduna siyokwazi ukuwusheshisa lomsebenzi. Sicela abahlala ezindaweni zasemakhaya baqale balungiselele ukutshela ubulumeni ukuthi yiziphi izinto abazidinga ngokushesha. Uma sisebenza ngokubambisana sizokwenza okuningi.

Honourable Speaker and Chairperson,

While having drawn the necessary lessons from earlier rural development initiatives, we have chosen the Greater Giyani Local Municipality in Limpopo as the first of the pilot projects for the campaign. Out of these projects will emerge lessons for the whole country.

In addition, we will work on the targeted renewal of rural towns, through grants such as the Neighbourhood Development Grant Programme. In this way, areas around the towns will benefit from the economic boost. With all these interventions, we are poised to change the face of rural areas in our country.

Compatriots,

Education will be a key priority for the next five years. We want our teachers, learners, and parents to work with government to turn our schools into thriving centres of excellence.

The Early Childhood Development Programme will be stepped up, with the aim of ensuring universal access to Grade R and doubling the number of 0-4 year old children by 2014.

We reiterate our non-negotiables. Teachers should be in school, in class, on time, teaching, with no neglect of duty, and no abuse of pupils! The children should be in class, on time, learning, being respectful of their teachers and each other, and doing their homework.

To improve school management, formal training will be a pre-condition for promoting teachers to become principals or heads of department.

I will meet school principals to share our vision on the revival of our education system.

Fellow South Africans,

We will increase our efforts to encourage all

pupils to complete their secondary education. The target is to increase enrollment rates in secondary schools to 95 percent by 2014. We are also looking at innovative measures to bring back into the system pupils who dropped out of school, and to provide support to them.

Honourable Members,

We are very concerned about reports of teachers who sexually harass and abuse children, particularly girls. We will ensure that the Guidelines on Sexual Harassment and Violence in Public Schools are widely disseminated, and that learners and teachers are familiar with and observant of them. We will take very serious, and very decisive, action against any teachers who abuse their authority and power by entering into sexual relationships with children.

To promote lifelong learning, the Adult Basic Education and Training Kha ri Gude Programme will be intensified.

Compatriots,

Honourable Members,

We have to ensure that training and skills development initiatives in the country respond to the requirements of the economy.

The Further Education and Training sector with its 50 colleges and 160 campuses nationally will be the primary site for skills development training. We will improve the access to higher education of children from poor families and ensure a sustainable funding structure for universities.

Fellow South Africans,

We are seriously concerned about the deterioration of the quality of healthcare, aggravated by the steady increase in the burden of disease in the past decade and a half. We have set ourselves the goals of further reducing inequalities in health-care provision, to boost human resource capacity, revitalise hospitals and clinics, and step up the fight against the scourge of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), and other diseases.

We must work together to improve the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan for the

Treatment, Management, and Care of HIV and AIDS so as to reduce the rate of new HIV infections by 50 percent by the year 2011. We want to reach 80 percent of those in need of antiretroviral (ARV) treatment also by 2011.

We will introduce a National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme in a phased and incremental manner. In order to initiate the NHI, the urgent rehabilitation of public hospitals will be undertaken through Public-Private Partnerships.

We are also paying urgent attention to the issues of remuneration of health professionals to remove uncertainty in our health services.

Working together will let us do more to promote quality healthcare, in line with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals to decrease poverty by half by 2014.

Fellow citizens,

Together, we must do more to fight crime. Our aim is to establish a transformed, integrated, modernised, properly resourced, and well-managed criminal justice system.

It is also critically important to improve the efficiency of the courts and the performance of prosecutors, and to enhance detective, forensic, and intelligence services. This work has started in earnest, and it will be undertaken with new energy and vigour. Among the immediate goals is to ensure that we increase the number of prosecutors and Legal Aid Board personnel. We will do the same with police detectives.

We changed the name of the relevant Ministry from Safety and Security to Police to emphasise that we want real operational energy in police work. This will contribute to the reduction of serious and violent crimes by the set target of 7 percent to 10 percent per annum.

The most serious attention will also be given to combating organised crime, as well as crimes against women and children.

Honourable Speaker and Chairperson,

While appreciating the investment of the private sector in the security industry, we will improve the regulation of this industry.

Amongst other key initiatives, we will start the

process of setting up a Border Management Agency; we shall intensify our efforts against cyber crime and identity theft, and improve systems in our jails to reduce repeat offending.

Compatriots,

I wish to underline our support for the continued transformation of the judiciary. The transformation should address key issues such as the enhancement of judicial independence, entrenching internal systems of judicial accountability, as well as ensuring full access to justice by all.

The success of the democratic system as a whole depends on good relations of mutual respect and a spirit of partnership among the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary. This is very important for our constitutional democracy.

Honourable Speaker and Chairperson,

We have repeatedly stated our commitment to fight corruption in the public service. We will pay particular attention to combating corruption and fraud in procurement and tender processes, application for drivers' licenses, social grants, IDs, and theft of police case dockets.

Let me emphasise that we all have a role to play in this war against crime. We must actively participate in Community Policing Forums. We must stop buying stolen goods, which encourages crime. We must report crime and assist the police with information to catch wrongdoers. In this way, we will move forward toward a crime-free society.

Honourable Members,

Since 1994, we have sought to create a united, cohesive society out of our fragmented past. We are called upon to continue this mission of promoting unity in diversity and developing a shared value system, based on the spirit of community solidarity and a caring society. Our shared value system should encourage us to become active citizens in the renewal of our country. We must build a common national identity and patriotism.

We must develop a common attachment to our country, our Constitution, and the national symbols. In this spirit, we will promote the

National Anthem, our country's flag, and all other national symbols.

Our children, from an early age, must be taught to pay allegiance to the Constitution and the national symbols, and know what it means to be South African citizens. We will ensure a common national approach to the changing of geographic and place names. This must provide an opportunity to involve all South Africans in forging an inclusive national identity, to deepen our understanding of our history and heritage.

Sport is a powerful nation-building tool. Working together we must support all our national teams from Bafana Bafana to the Proteas and the Springboks, from Banyana Banyana to Paralympians. Our teams can only do well with our support.

Allow me to use this opportunity to congratulate our national teams for their performances in the past week, indeed in pulling off a hat trick. The country's women's netball team has done us proud by winning the Tri-Nations Netball Challenge. Congratulations to the Sevens Springboks who have become the IRB Sevens World Series Champions—and not forgetting the Blue Bulls who have won the Super 14 finals in a convincing fashion! We take this opportunity to wish the Springboks well in the upcoming series against the British and Irish Lions.

It is clear that we need to invest on a large scale in sports development. We will speed up the revival of school sport and ensure that it forms part of the school curriculum. In addition, we will ensure that the provision of sport facilities in poorer communities receives priority.

Honourable Speaker and Chairperson,

We have committed ourselves over the years to contribute to building a better Africa and a better world. The main goal of government for the medium term is to ensure that our foreign relations contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to sustainable economic growth and development.

To this effect, we will continue to prioritise the African continent by strengthening the African Union (AU), and its structures, and give

special focus to the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Equally important, and closer to home, is the strengthening of regional integration with particular emphasis on improving the political and economic integration of South African Development Community (SADC), towards the AU goal of a Union government. We will establish a South African Development Partnership Agency to promote developmental partnerships with other countries on the continent.

South Africa will continue to assist in the reconstruction and development of the African continent especially in post-conflict situations. We will continue to encourage a peaceful and sustainable settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-state solution. We will support the peace efforts of the African Union and the United Nations on the African continent, including in the Saharawi Arab Republic and Darfur in Sudan.

As the Chairperson of SADC and Facilitator, we will participate in promoting inclusive government until free and fair elections are held in Zimbabwe. The plight of the Zimbabwean people has had a negative impact on the SADC region, especially South Africa. We call upon all peace-loving countries in the world to support the inclusive government to achieve economic recovery.

We will support efforts of the SADC region to resolve the situation in Madagascar.

Allow me, distinguished guests, to pay tribute to the South African National Defense Force for their sterling role in peace building in the continent. Through continental and regional bodies, we will work toward the entrenchment of democracy and the respect for human rights on the African continent. We will contribute to the strengthening of South-South relations and pursue mutually beneficial agreements with key countries of the South. We will continue to enhance relations with the developed North including the G8, and our strategic partnership with the European Union. We will continue to play an active role in ensuring the conclusion of the World Trade Organisation Doha Development round of negotiations.

Honourable Speaker and Chairperson,

Being a dry country, South Africa requires urgent action to mitigate adverse environmental changes and to ensure the provision of water to citizens. Amongst various programmes, we will implement the Water for Growth and Development Strategy, which will strengthen water management. We will continue to improve our energy efficiency and reliance on renewable energy.

Honourable Members,

A developmental state requires the improvement of public services and strengthening of democratic institutions. We have established two ministries in the presidency to strengthen both strategic planning as well as performance monitoring and evaluation.

To ensure delivery on our commitments, we will hold Cabinet Ministers accountable through performance instruments, using established targets and output measures, starting in July. We will also involve State-Owned Enterprises and Development Finance Institutions in the government planning processes and improve the monitoring and evaluation of their performance.

Honourable Members,
Fellow South Africans,

To ensure that all three spheres—local, provincial, and national—improve service delivery, we will speed up the establishment of a single Public Service. This administration will insist on putting people first in service delivery. We will ensure courteous and efficient service from front-counter staff in the provision of services in all government departments.

In this era of renewal, we will move toward a more interactive government. To lead by example, work has begun on the establishment of a public liaison capacity in the presidency. In addition to receiving letters and emails from the public, we will also establish a hotline for easier access. Staff will handle each public inquiry as if it was the only one, following it through all the channels until it receives the attention it deserves.

Honourable Speaker and Chairperson,

The National Youth Development Agency, formed through the merger of Umsobomvu Youth Fund and the National Youth Commission, will be launched on June 16 in Ekurhuleni. The institutions are being merged to enhance service and development opportunities provided to the youth. The Agency will link up unemployed young graduates with economic opportunities, strengthen efforts to expand the National Youth Service Programme, and support young entrepreneurs.

Speaker and Chairperson,
Distinguished Guests,

Next month our beloved Madiba will turn 91. People all over the world still continue to clamour for his presence and for him to address their crises. His values and his example of dedication to the service of humanity is a shining example in today's troubled world.

An international campaign has been initiated by the Nelson Mandela Foundation and related organisations, called Mandela Day, which sums up what Tata stands for. Mandela Day will be celebrated on July 18 each year. It will give people in South Africa and all over the world the opportunity to do something good to help others.

Madiba was politically active for 67 years, and on Mandela Day, people all over the world, in the workplace, at home, and in schools, will be called upon to spend at least 67 minutes of their time doing something useful within their communities, especially among the less fortunate. Let us wholeheartedly support Mandela Day and encourage the world to join us in this wonderful campaign.

Honourable Speaker and Chairperson,
Fellow South Africans,

We have presented to the nation our programme for the next five years. Attached to each commitment we make is a detailed project plan, with targets and critical milestones. This information will in due course be made public. Indeed, as citizens we should at the same time ask ourselves what is it that we can do on our own to

help promote this national programme. To be a citizen is not only about rights, it is also about responsibility, to make a contribution to make ours a better country.

We also expect to work well with opposition parties in Parliament, in the spirit of putting the country first. In addition, Madiba taught us well that this country belongs to all, black and white. Working for reconciliation and unity will remain important as we move forward.

Since the implementation of our programme will take place in the face of the economic downturn, we will have to act prudently—no wastage, no rollovers of funds—every cent must be spent wisely and fruitfully. We must cut our cloth according to our size.

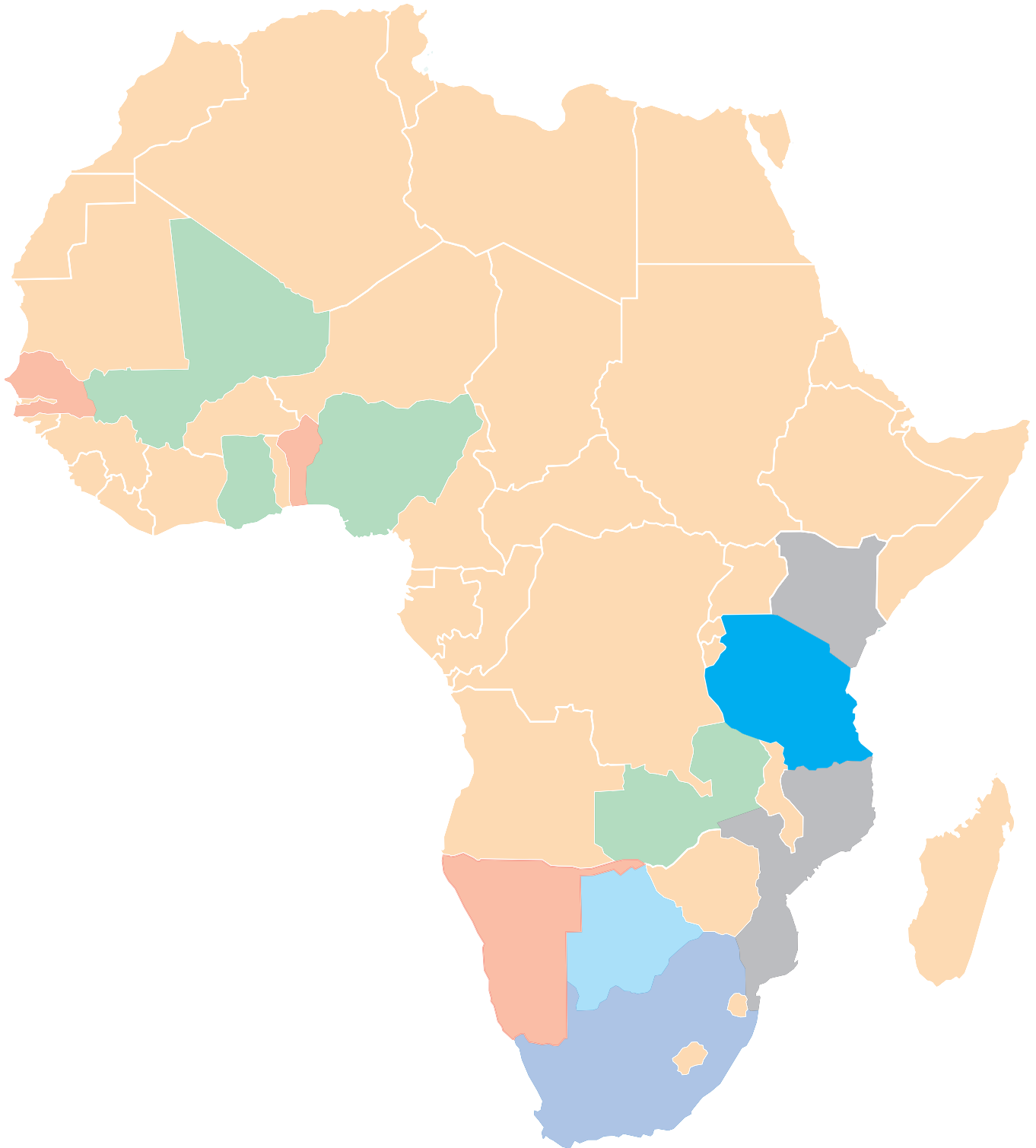
Fellow South Africans,

Working together we can do more to realise our common vision of a better and more prosperous nation!

This is the partnership we are calling for.

I thank you!

TANZANIA



TANZANIA



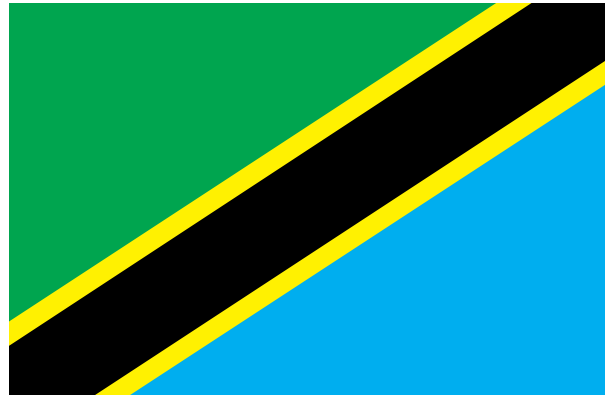
New Year Message by His Excellency

Jakaya Kikwete

“A Secure and Stable Country”

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

January 1, 2010



My fellow Tanzanians,

We should feel happy and proud that we are winding up the year 2009 with a secure, peaceful, and tranquil country. The state of our nation is strong, and the occasional divisive rhetoric and actions by some ill-intentioned individuals bent on driving a wedge between Tanzanians have failed to put a dent in the unity of our country.

I thank and congratulate you, my fellow Tanzanians, for showing political maturity, patriotism, and wisdom in refusing to fall victim to these evil machinations. Instead, you chose to remain steadfast promoting unity, development, and security of our nation. That is the spirit and understanding that has preserved our national unity, peace, and stability since independence from British colonialism in mainland Tanzania and Sultan rule in Zanzibar.

I urge you, brothers and sisters, to hold fast to the same stance in the coming year in which we shall hold a general election. We should not allow any attempt to divide us on religious, tribal, or racial grounds, or between mainland versus Zanzibar or between Unguja versus Pemba. Neither should we tolerate people bent on causing chaos in the country. The experience of some of our neighbours, whose people we have given refuge in our country, should be a lesson for us on what not to do. I am confident that we will not allow our country to lose the valuable peace and security that we enjoy.

TALKS BETWEEN CIVIC UNITED FRONT (CUF) AND CHAMA CHA MAPINDUZI (CCM)

My fellow Tanzanians,
While I plead with you to hold our country's peace and stability dearly, I must acknowledge the new tide of hope flowing from Zanzibar. The move by His Excellency Amani Abeid Karume, the President of Zanzibar and the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, to meet with Maalim Seif Sharif Hamad, the Secretary General of the Civic United Front (CUF), has raised new hope of a breakthrough in the political stalemate in the Isles, which augurs well for the coming general election. We should continue supporting these leaders of ours so that they may safely conclude the work they have started for the benefit of Zanzibaris and Tanzanians in general.

CRIME IS BEING TAMED

My fellow Tanzanians,
This year, we saw concrete measures taken in fighting crime and other social evils. Many criminals have been arrested and arraigned before the courts. Several criminal plots were nipped in the bud. Many alleged perpetrators of corruption have been brought before the law. I thank our colleagues in the Police Force and the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB) for the good work they have done. I urge them to double their efforts in the year 2010. They can count on my full support and that of the government.

In the year 2009, incidents of killing of fellow brothers and sisters, who have a skin impairment known as albinism, declined. Seven deaths were reported during the year compared to twenty-seven in 2008. All the same, the killing of seven people is still too much. There should not be even a single killing of anyone.

In the coming year we will intensify the combat of this particular type of crime with the goal of eliminating it altogether. Luckily, information gathered from a national poll conducted in early 2009 is helping the law enforcement agencies in

tagging suspects. Already, three cases have been heard and determined by the courts. The culprits have been convicted and several have been condemned to death. Justice has been done.

ROAD ACCIDENTS

I am saddened by the fact that we have not yet been able to end road accidents, in spite of my personal calls in every previous end-of-the-year message, as well as those of my fellow leaders every time there was a bad road accident. Up to September of this year, 15,798 road accidents were recorded, compared to 13,405 that occurred in the same period last year. These accidents caused 2,685 deaths compared to 2,040 that happened in 2008. The number of injuries increased to 15,508 this year from 12,508 in 2008.

I appeal to road users, especially drivers, to strictly observe traffic laws and reduce accidents drastically in 2010. The Traffic Police should be extra diligent in enforcing traffic safety laws and must take stern measures against reckless drivers. The Ministry of Home Affairs should expedite sharpening of penalty against reckless driving.

THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY

The past year was very difficult as far as the national economy is concerned. We did not achieve our targets. Exports of agricultural, live-stock, industrial, and mining products fell due to the shrinkage of market opportunities in Europe, the Americas, and Asia. The prices of export products nose-dived. The number of tourists visiting Tanzania dropped, and earnings from tourism also went down. Investors have postponed decisions on investing in our country. Transit trade destined for neighbouring countries has decreased very much. Government revenue has dropped by 9 percent and the economic growth rate is expected to slow down from the projected 7.8 percent to 5 percent. This has very bad consequences for our nation. This outcome is largely attributable to the global economic turndown experienced since 2007, which worsened very dramatically in 2008.

As you may recall, on June 10, 2009, I announced an emergency *Economic Stimulus Plan*, worth about \$1.5 billion, to cushion and strengthen the economy of our country. Without any doubt, this is a very dear price to be shouldered by a poor country like ours, but it is unavoidable. To do otherwise would have worsened our economy and jeopardized the gains we have painstakingly attained over the years. It is true, however, that spending such a large amount of money on the *Stimulus Package* reduced the budget for other development activities.

Under the *Package*, the government has underwritten bank debts of companies and other companies threatened by bankruptcy as a result of the drastic drop in export earnings caused by the fall in world market commodity prices. We also compensated cotton producers by TZS80 shillings per kilogram to cushion them from the dramatic fall in world market prices. Cotton was the agricultural commodity most affected by the price escalation.

We also established a special fund to guarantee investors borrowing from wary bankers. For the government budget, the package provided bridging for a decline in revenue collection.

I am happy to say that the plan is working well and almost all the targets that we set have been achieved. It is my hope that the package will succeed in reversing the slide in our country's economic fortunes.

THE YEAR AHEAD

The year 2010 will not be easier, although we expect it to be more promising. There are two indicators that give me hope. First, the rate at which the economic meltdown in the rich countries is being brought under control. Second, the signs of success of the emergency measures we have taken to salvage key sectors of our economy, including tourism. I must emphasize, however, that the road to full recovery is still long, and there are many hurdles to be overcome. We have to brace for hard work ahead.

RAIN FORECAST AND FOOD SITUATION

The Waswahili have a saying: Misfortunes never come alone. As we determined how to address the adverse effects of the global economic meltdown that threatened to wipe out the successes of our economic reforms, drought struck, further complicating the survival challenge facing us. For two years in a row the regions that usually receive good rains have experienced serious drought. These regions are: the Coast, Dar es Salaam, Tanga, Kilimanjaro, Arusha, Manyara, Mara, Mwanza, Shinyanga, and Dodoma. The result has been a severe shortage of food in almost every part of the country.

During the 2008-2009 season, the country recorded a deficit of 860,000 tons of cereals, and projections for 2009-2010 indicate a food deficit of 1.3 million tons. As a result, many people will rely on relief food supplies from the government. For example, in 2008 the government dished out 11,610 tons in relief supplies to 425,313 people in 30 districts in the country. By December 22, 2009, the tally had added up to 115,837.1 tons of cereals to needy people in 59 districts, and it is projected that more assistance will be needed. I want to reassure fellow Tanzanians that we will make sure food is available for all who need it. We won't allow even a single Tanzanian to die of hunger.

Very unfortunately, in some districts in the northern Arusha and Manyara regions, the drought was really severe and has killed many livestock. Pastoralists in those areas have been reduced to paupers. I visited Longido district and saw with my own eyes the serious consequences of the drought. The government will extend relief food supplies to the drought victims and help them begin a new life.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

During the year, we endeavoured to strengthen relations with other nations in the world, as well as international organizations. Tanzania has continued to gain respect in international circles. For

this reason we have been invited to participate in resolving many international issues. We have been visited by many influential leaders including several heads of state, and our leaders reciprocated these visits. These relations have contributed substantially to the development of our country and the welfare of our people. We secured markets for our goods and agricultural produce and attracted development aid and direct foreign investment inflows.

As a result of the good international rating, our country has been chosen to host the next *World Economic Forum on Africa*, scheduled for May 2010. This is the first time this kind of meeting has taken place outside of Cape Town, South Africa. It is a great honour for Tanzania, and I ask all Tanzanians, especially the residents of Dar es Salaam, to be hospitable to our visitors, who will bring business opportunities and knowledge. Let us extend to them our usual generosity so that they may make Dar es Salaam and Tanzania their preferred destination.

THE 2010 GENERAL ELECTION

My fellow Tanzanians,
Local government elections were held throughout the country very successfully this past year. I wish to use this occasion to congratulate the organisers and the electorate for this achievement. It confirms that democracy is continuing to take root in Tanzania. On behalf of Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), I wish to thank Tanzanians for continuing to place their trust in our Party. Trust begets trust. We won't fail you.

As you are aware, 2010 is the general election year. There will be elections for the President, Members of Parliament, and Councillors. I do hope that we will practice true democracy built on the principles of freedom and justice. That is the secret behind the maintenance of peace and stability in our country. We in government are well prepared to ensure that all the resources required by the Electoral Commission are provided in good time. We have set aside adequate funds and we will do all we can to ensure that the elections are free, fair, and peaceful.

My plea to you, fellow citizens, is that you should come out in large numbers and participate in the election process in all its stages. Those who have not registered themselves for the polls should do so.

Political party leaders should mobilize their members and supporters for full participation in the election, and please play by the rules. My wish is that the next election will be the most democratic and produce the best leaders. We should ensure that this election does not become a source of divisions, social unrest, hatred, intra-, or inter-party conflicts. Each one of us has a role to play in ensuring that matters do not get out of hand.

CONCLUSION

I wish to conclude my New Year greetings by thanking God for the mercy and blessings shown to us in 2009. Let us pray that God multiplies the good tidings showered on us this year and spares us misfortune in 2010. I again thank you all fellow Tanzanians for giving me your trust and for the cooperation you extended to me and to your government. The solidarity and cooperation given by every one of you made it possible for our country to navigate through 2009 unified. This is the secret of our successes. We care and cherish your support.

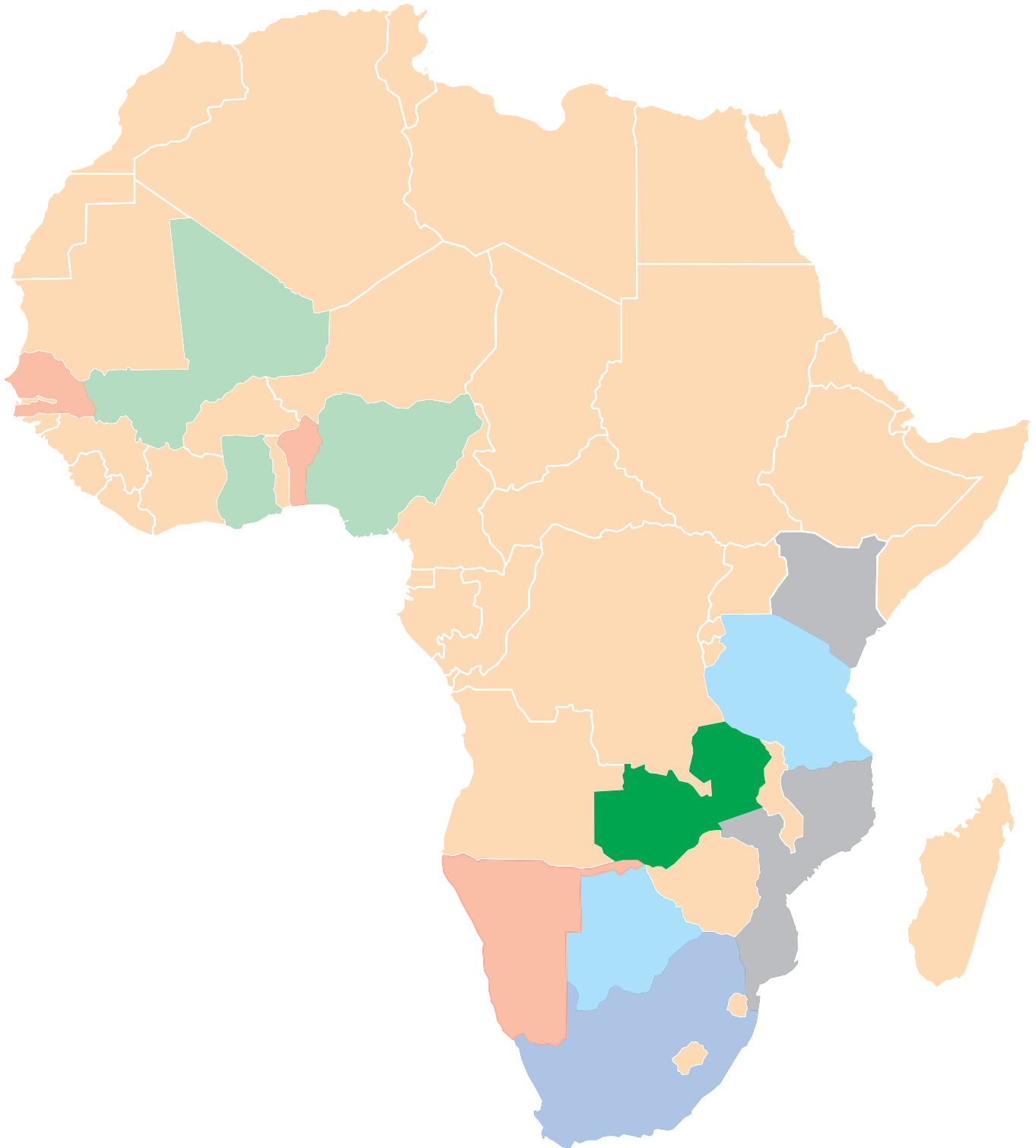
As we start the New Year, I would like to reassure you that the government will continue to serve you with all our heart and energies. I believe that with unity, hard work, and skill we will succeed. I wish all of you happiness and prosperity in the New Year 2010.

God Bless Africa!

God Bless Tanzania!

Thank you for listening to me.

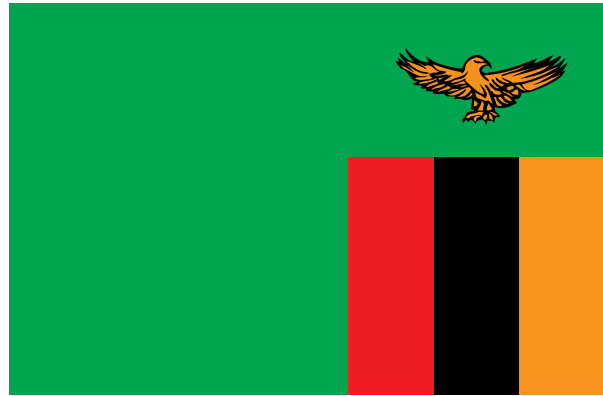
ZAMBIA



ZAMBIA



**Speech by His Excellency
Mr. Rupiah Bwezani Banda, President
of the Republic of Zambia, on the
Official Opening of the Fourth Session
of the Tenth National Assembly
Lusaka, Zambia
September 18, 2009**



INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker,

It has only been eight months since I last addressed this august House when opening the Third Session of the Tenth National Assembly. The House will note that this period is only eight months, as opposed to the traditional twelve months between openings of sessions. The House is aware that among the bills the House passed in the last session was the Constitution of Zambia (amendment) bill, which affected the realignment of the budget cycle.

Mr. Speaker,

The change in the national budget cycle has brought the opening of Parliament forward from the traditional month of January to September. This gives honourable members of Parliament an opportunity to complete debating the budget before the onset of the government financial year beginning January 1.

The year 2010, therefore, will go down in our annals of history as the year in which my administration implemented the change in the budget cycle. I am convinced that this change will improve the management of the budget since implementation of programmes will now begin in January, giving the government a full year to implement its budget. It is my expectation that the nation will rise to the challenge of ensuring that this change is used to overcome past failures to utilise all the funds in the budget.

During my last address to this House, I reflected on 2008 as a year of mixed fortunes. I described it as a difficult year, not only for this nation but the rest of the world, as well. Because apart from the illness and subsequent demise of our late president, Dr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, sc., the year 2008 witnessed the onset of the global economic crisis.

Today, Zambia's economy is showing indications that the worst may be over. The mining sector, the mainstay of our economy, which was under severe constraints, is beginning to recover. This is largely due to the measures my government introduced in the 2009 budget, as well as the rise in the copper prices.

Mr. Speaker,

On the political front, I am delighted to note that our young democracy is being consolidated. In this regard, the separation of powers of the legislature, judiciary, and executive, together with the vibrant media and civil society, has provided the necessary checks and balances for democracy to flourish. As a result, Zambia continues to be a beacon of peace and tranquility.

OBITUARY

Mr. Speaker,

It is sad that death has again robbed this House of two of its members and the nation of selfless leaders. During the last session, Honourable Nasim-ul-gani Hamir, a member of Parliament for the Chitambo Constituency, who was also Deputy Minister of Lands, passed away on May 8, 2009 in Lusaka.

Since the House adjourned, Honourable Benny Tetamashimba, who was a member of Parliament for the Solwezi Central constituency and Minister of Local government and Housing, passed away on September 5, 2009 in Lusaka.

May I now ask the House to be upstanding by observing a minute of silence in their honour.

May the good Lord grant their souls eternal peace and rest.

BY-ELECTIONS

Mr. Speaker,

As a result of the demise of Honourable Hamir, a by-election was held in Chitambo Parliamentary Constituency just before the adjournment of the last session. This election was tightly contested, but conducted in a free and fair manner in accordance with our electoral regulations. I wish to congratulate Honourable Dr. Solomon Musonda, the newly elected member of Parliament for Chitambo, for his victory.

PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS

Mr. Speaker,

During the last session, the House dealt with matters important for the welfare of our people. Members of this august House again debated serious and, at times, delicate issues of national importance in a way that upheld transparency, accountability, and democracy.

Mr. Speaker,

Allow me to thank you for the impartial and able manner in which you conducted the business of the House during that session. Let me also congratulate the Honourable Madam Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Chairperson of Committees of the whole House, and all chairpersons of parliamentary sessional and select committees, for the effective way in which they discharged their duties in this house.

In the same vein, allow me to congratulate the leader of government business in the House, his Honour the Vice President and Minister of Justice, Honourable George Kunda, SC. for the excellent manner in which he handled government business.

May I, through you, Mr. Speaker, commend the clerk of the National Assembly and her staff for the excellent service they rendered to the House during the Third Session of the Tenth National Assembly.

Mr. Speaker,

The last session, though short, was able to consider and pass a total of twenty-seven bills. In addition to the bills considered, the House continued to exercise its role and obligation to hold the government accountable to the nation by debating 365 parliamentary questions, three private members' motions, and twenty-three ministerial statements.

I wish to commend you, Honourable Members, for freely articulating your views with regard to deliberations in this House. The amendments that were adopted on the floor of this House demonstrated the constructive and positive manner in which this House scrutinised government intentions and proposals contained in the bills. This is as it should be. This is what forms the very basis of our democratic dispensation, and it is my prayer that this spirit continues to flourish.

Mr. Speaker,

I wish to commend Parliament for continuing to actively implement the Parliamentary Reforms Programme to improve its efficiency and effectiveness and make it more representative and accessible.

Some of the successes scored under this programme include:

- expansion of Parliament radio coverage to Kasama, Mansa, and Solwezi. By the end of 2009, Parliament radio coverage will have been extended to Mongu and Hipata;
- purchase of fifty motor bikes for constituency offices; and
- construction of constituency offices at Rufunsa, Mwembeshi, and Chasefu. Construction of offices is on-going until all the constituencies are covered.

ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT

Mr. Speaker,

The year 2009 was a test of the resilience of our people and a measure of the effectiveness of the socio-economic policies our government is

pursuing. The national economy was under pressure as a result of the global economic crisis. It is, however, important to take cognisance and give credit to the efforts government has been making to mitigate the impact of the crisis.

I wish to commend the Zambian people for their patience and support. The impact of the crisis was felt most in the mining sector, with the closing of some mines and the scaling down of operations and investments, resulting in job losses in some mines. Manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism were also adversely affected, resulting in reduced domestic revenue.

The economy also experienced volatility in the foreign exchange market, slowing implementation of capital projects, raising the cost of international financing, and reduced funding from cooperating partners.

Mr. Speaker,

To mitigate these effects, government intervened by implementing fiscal and monetary measures including stabilizing the price of fuel and food through tax mechanisms. The reduction in revenue collection necessitated that government realign resource allocation to infrastructure development in energy, agriculture, tourism, and social sectors. Further, efforts to attract foreign and domestic investment were scaled up through the introduction of a new mining fiscal regime.

Mr. Speaker,

As a result of the measures put in place by government, our economy is expected to grow this year, though with a reduced projected gross domestic product of 4.3 percent. The inflation rate is also expected to drop from 16.6 percent in 2008 to 10 percent this year. As the developments in the world financial markets continue to negatively impact our economy, government must continue to implement measures to ensure that Zambia positions itself to benefit from the recovery.

Mr. Speaker,

It is worth noting that contrary to the experience in other countries, where banks and other financial institutions collapsed, the overall finan-

cial performance and condition of our banking sector remained stable. This performance has been attributed to enhanced supervision by the Bank of Zambia.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, government will continue to engage our cooperating partners for increased resource allocation to poverty reduction programmes as contained in the medium term plans. To enhance budgetary resource management and financial planning, my government will bring to Parliament the Budget Bill, which is intended to provide a legal framework to the budgetary and planning process.

Mr. Speaker,

In the area of debt management, government is implementing a public debt management strategy aimed at maintaining government borrowing at sustainable levels. A recent debt sustainability analysis indicates that Zambia's debt is sustainable in the midst of the world economic crunch.

Mr. Speaker,

My government convened a national indaba this April to discuss the impact of the global economic crisis on the Zambian economy and propose strategies for coping with the crisis. Government values the recommendations of the indaba and is bringing those matters requiring government approval before the Cabinet, while implementing those recommendations that are straight-forward.

The recommendations of the Zambia International Business Advisory Council (ZIBAC), held in April 2009, are being handled in the same manner. I am confident that the 2010 budget will further consolidate measures to cushion the Zambian economy against the effects of the global economic crisis.

Mr. Speaker,

My government remains resolute in adhering to medium- and long-term development planning instruments. In the medium term, the Fifth National Development Plan 2006-2010 will be succeeded by the Sixth National Development Plan 2011-2015, preparation of which has

commenced and is expected to be launched in June 2010. I urge all stakeholders to fully participate in the preparation and implementation of this plan.

In the long term, we shall continue to be guided by the National Vision 2030 as a framework for achieving national development goals, in particular, wealth creation.

COMMERCE, TRADE, AND INDUSTRY

Mr. Speaker,

As stated in my last address to this House, government remains committed to reducing the cost of doing business in Zambia in order to provide a conducive investment climate. Factors such as cumbersome licensing procedures and regulatory framework, poor infrastructure, and high transport and communication costs that account for the high cost of doing business, are being streamlined.

To this end, government is implementing the Private Sector Development Reform Programme. Under this Program, priority reform areas are labour laws, business licensing reform, and micro, small, and medium enterprises development.

Mr. Speaker,

To be implemented, the Private Sector Development Reform Programme requires legislative amendments to the various economic sector legislations. These include agriculture, tourism, commerce, finance, employment, labour, and energy. As a start, my government will present the following bills to implement the business licensing reforms:

- The Independent Broadcasting Authority (amendment) Bill, 2009;
- The Mines and Minerals Development (amendment) Bill, 2009;
- The Zambia Development Agency (amendment) Bill, 2009;
- The Gold Trade (repeal) Bill, 2009; and
- The Control of Goods (repeal) Bill, 2009.

Regarding micro, small, and medium enterprises, which are a vital component of this programme, a national policy was approved by the government that aims at unlocking the potential of the same sector.

Mr. Speaker,

In my last address to this House, I announced the construction of *Multi-Facility Economic Zones* (MFEZs) for both export and domestic oriented industries. I wish to inform the House that the development of Chambishi Mfez is progressing well. Ten enterprises have been housed in the zone, creating more new jobs. The number of jobs will increase as the enterprises expand. By the year 2011, this MFEZ alone is expected to accommodate up to 60 zone enterprises with a projected output volume exceeding \$1.5 billion, of which more than \$600 million will be exported.

The MFEZ being developed near the Lusaka International Airport is a sub-zone to the Chambishi MFEZ. Infrastructure development here is expected to start this year with the construction of access roads. In addition, the Lusaka South MFESZ is also progressing well. It will also provide unique opportunities for investments.

Mr. Speaker,

In this regard, I encourage Zambians to take advantage of the opportunities to be created under this initiative.

Mr. Speaker,

Zambia hosted the Smart Partnership International Dialogue in 2008, during which a number of joint projects were initiated with foreign investors in the areas of tourism, education, and technology. As a follow-up to the conference, Zambia has commenced the process of forming a smart partnership national hub that will be a base for networking with other smart partners the world over in joint ventures and to foster national development.

Mr. Speaker,

Zambia continued to pursue her trade agenda by working with partners within the regional

framework of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

At the last COMESA Heads of State and Government Summit in June 2009 in Zimbabwe, the COMESA customs union was launched to facilitate trade by eliminating trade barriers, harmonising trade related programmes, and improving efficiency in the institutional and infrastructural framework.

Mr. Speaker,

The benefits of this will be a larger market for Zambian goods and services and the eventual lowering of production costs.

The House may wish to know that Zambia is now eligible to access the adjustment facility after ratifying the COMESA fund in February 2009. The facility will address the problems of costs that may arise from regional integration. The fund also has a window intended to support construction and maintenance of infrastructure and for addressing some of the limited production capacity of member states. In this regard, I wish to call upon all relevant stakeholders to take full advantage of these opportunities.

Mr. Speaker,

Under the African Growth Opportunities Act (AGO), the governments of Zambia and the United States of America have agreed to establish a technical working group to work out measures that will help expand and diversify trade between the two countries. This should be taken full advantage of to be beneficial.

Mr. Speaker,

I recently launched the Millennium Challenge Account Zambia—a programme being supported by the government of the United States of America through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which is awarded to countries that consistently meet standards in the areas of good governance, investing in people, and promoting economic freedom. Zambia will have access to substantial grant resources to be applied

in projects that will promote economic growth and poverty reduction once it signs the compact.

Mr. Speaker,

Competition and consumer protection are paramount in a developing economy such as ours. Unfortunately, the current legal framework governing this is weak and requires an overhaul. To this effect, government will be introducing a Consumer and Competition Bill to this august House to strengthen the legal framework.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Speaker,

During my January speech to this House, I emphasised the need for the country to develop the right skills for economic empowerment and poverty reduction. These are essential for the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMES) and the development of the country. Therefore, government will continue to build capacity in general as well as technical education within the framework of the technical education and vocational training.

Government has thus completed major works at Chipata, Solwezi, and Mongu training institutes, while it is rehabilitating workshops, classrooms, and hostel blocks at various training institutions across the country. Further, government intends to increase capacity to absorb school dropouts by expanding existing and building new skills training institutions.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Speaker,

In spite of the high prices of fertiliser and petroleum that were faced last year, I am happy to note that Zambia managed to produce enough food to meet its requirements and surplus to export.

Mr. Speaker,

Following my directive to the Food Reserve Agency to intensify crop marketing, I am happy to inform this august House that the agency is

now purchasing maize and other designated food crops across the country. The House may wish to know that the number of satellite depots has tripled per district compared to last season. The increase in satellite depots is intended to give greater access to farmers, especially in remote areas. Funds amounting to ZK471 billion have been made available for this purpose. I wish to urge other players in the market to pay a fair price to the farmers for their produce.

Mr. Speaker,

The importance of cassava as a food crop is increasing in Zambia. For the past five years, the country has been producing the equivalent of 1.1 million metric tonnes of cassava flour annually. Government will, therefore, encourage cassava production and the development of agro-industries to add value to this crop.

Mr. Speaker,

Government is concerned by crop levies imposed by councils on produce being transported across district boundaries. Since farmers have difficulties in finding markets for their produce, these levies only serve to complicate the marketing of crops. I have directed the Minister of Local Government and Housing to abolish the levies.

Mr. Speaker,

Government is aware that a lot of food goes to waste because of poor storage. Therefore, government through the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) is rehabilitating silos and storage sheds to ensure that food produced is properly stored.

LIVESTOCK AND FISHERIES

Mr. Speaker,

The livestock and fisheries sectors are also essential for food security and business. Performance in these sectors has not been satisfactory. To improve performance, my government has created a Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, which was unanimously approved by this House.

In 2010, our government will focus on strengthening disease control programmes

through the creation of disease-control zones, among other things. Government will also focus on establishing animal breeding centres to produce animals for the restocking programme, which is aimed at improving livestock population and quality.

RESEARCH AND EXTENSION SERVICES

Mr. Speaker,
Government will continue to strengthen agricultural research and extension services in the country to improve productivity, especially among the small-scale farmers. To achieve this, 476 motorcycles were bought in 2009 to improve the mobility of extension staff. Support has also been given for the rehabilitation and construction of agricultural infrastructure, such as camp houses, farmer training centres, and farm training institutes.

Mr. Speaker,
The development of farm blocs is another programme that government is using to fast track agricultural development in Zambia. Progress has been made towards making the Nansanga farm bloc in Serenje operational.

Mr. Speaker,
Provision of inputs to small-scale farmers through the Farmer Input Support Programme, commonly known as the Fertilizer Support Programmes (FSP) is critical to Zambia's food security. In its current form, the FSP implementation modalities have had weaknesses that have prompted a review of the programme. Some adjustments have thus been made in its implementation.

Mr. Speaker,
These include increasing the number of beneficiaries participating in the programme by reducing the size of the input pack from the current eight bags of fertilizer and twenty kilograms of maize seed to four bags of fertilizer and ten kilograms of seed.

The programme will cover 500,000 small-scale farmers as compared to the 250,000 farmers covered last season; this will improve production efficiency and reduce the amount of fertilizer being sold by beneficiaries. In addition, the distribution and monitoring mechanism of the programme will be streamlined through camp agricultural committees in order to improve targeting of beneficiaries. Further, farmers who receive inputs from FSP will also be targeted to receive extension services in order to improve yields.

The House may wish to know that fertilizer for the 2009/2010 season is already in all districts. This early distribution will ensure that farmers get to plant on time.

LAND

Mr. Speaker,
Proper management of land is essential to Zambia's prosperity. It is for this reason that government has continued to encourage our people to put land to productive use. Since about 90 percent of land is customary, government is working with traditional leaders to put the land to good use for the benefit of our nation.

Mr. Speaker,
To facilitate the opening up of more land for development by councils, government will continue to provide financial support to the local authorities through the Land Development Fund.

Mr. Speaker,
It is important that councils that have ceased to plan development under their jurisdiction, resulting in the mushrooming of unplanned settlements, fulfill their obligation. I am, therefore, calling upon all planning authorities to fulfill their statutory obligations.

Mr. Speaker,
It is important that as the country develops both rural and urban development is conducted in an orderly manner. My government will, therefore, bring to this House the Urban and Regional Planning Bill, the purpose of which will

be to strengthen the Town and Country Planning Legislative Regime.

Mr. Speaker,

Government will continue working with neighbouring countries to ensure that all our borders are physically marked and reaffirmed. This is important as it prevents unnecessary boundary disputes. As a start, a stretch of 175 kilometres on the Zambia-Malawi border was physically marked this year. Sensitization programmes in readiness for the reaffirmation of this border have also been carried out for communities living along the Zambia-Mozambique border.

TOURISM

Mr. Speaker,

The tourism sector continues to rank high on our development agenda as it holds great potential in the diversification of our economy. In my last address, I stated that government would embark on targeted and focused development of priority tourism areas, with particular emphasis on the Kasaba Bay and Livingstone areas. I now wish to inform this House that the preparation of the Integrated Development Plans for Kasaba Bay and the Area Action Plan for Livingstone are nearing completion. Government will soon embark on promotions aimed at attracting credible local and international investors to the areas.

Mr. Speaker,

To make Kasaba Bay more attractive for investment, the provision of basic infrastructure is underway. To this effect, construction of the Mbala-Kasaba Bay Road and the Lufubu River Bridge has already been contracted out. Government has also contracted out the rehabilitation and extension of the Kasaba Bay Airport runway in order to enable it to handle larger aircrafts.

In addition, government has also embarked on the upgrading of the hydro power station at Lunzua from 0.75 megawatts to ten megawatts and construction of the transmission line to connect Kasaba Bay to the power station.

Mr. Speaker,

The South Luangwa National Park is another priority area for tourism development. However, poor accessibility to and within the area continues to pose a serious constraint to further development of tourism. Government, therefore, has this year embarked on rehabilitating the Chipata-Mfuwe Road leading to the National Park at a cost of ZK200 billion.

Tourism conferencing has proved to be more successful in the face of reduced numbers of tourist in-flow. Government has, therefore, focused on promoting this type of tourism. In addition, the government is consolidating Zambia's position as a tourist destination by intensifying promotions in traditional markets. Further, in-roads are being made in attracting tourists from the emerging markets of Russia and Asia, particularly from China, India, Malaysia, and Japan. Government is working with the private sector to make local tourism packages affordable for Zambians.

Mr. Speaker,

In view of the importance that government attaches to the tourism sector, my government intends to present before this House the Tourism and Hospitality Bill. The bill is intended to strengthen the current legal framework in which the tourism sector operates. Once passed by this House, the bill is expected to stimulate development in the tourism and hospitality industry.

ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Speaker,

The accelerated development programmes that the government is implementing can harm the environment if not well managed. Combined with the effects of climate change, there is an increased potential for harming the environment.

Mr. Speaker,

Government this year launched the National Policy on Environment that will ensure that socioeconomic development is achieved without

compromising the quality of the environment. The implementation of this policy, which is a priority, will contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker,

To deal with the concern of the high rate of deforestation that I acknowledged in my last address to this House, government has commenced reviewing the forest policy and revising forest legislation. In addition, government is looking at innovative ways to stop deforestation. To this effect, I wish to announce that I have constituted a team of eminent persons to spearhead a tree planting programme that will be headed by our first republican president, Dr. Kenneth David Kaunda.

Mr. Speaker,

In order to conserve wildlife as a resource for tourism, government will bring the new Wildlife Bill before this House for consideration.

WATER RESOURCES

Mr. Speaker,

It is regrettable that although water is one of our country's key natural resources, its potential to contribute to socioeconomic development, especially outside the energy sector, is largely unexploited. In agriculture for instance, the contribution of irrigation to Zambia's food security is still small. In addition, the majority of our people still have no access to safe and adequate water supplies.

Government is determined to address this problem and will revise the National Water Policy. Government has additionally stepped-up efforts in constructing water storage dams and sinking boreholes around the country in order to increase access to safe water.

ENERGY

Mr. Speaker,

The performance of the economy is dependent on stable and sustainable energy. The focus of government is to thus ensure a stable supply of

electricity and petroleum products and the promotion of new and renewable sources of energy.

In the electricity sub-sector, government continues to focus on increasing generation capacity to meet an ever growing demand. Government has successfully completed the rehabilitation and upgrading of the Kafue Gorge and Kariba North Bank stations, which has added an extra 180 megawatts to the national power output.

Mr. Speaker,

In view of the high investment required in the generation of electricity, government is encouraging private sector participation in the construction of power generating stations. This is being done through public-private partnership as is the case with the Kafue Lower, Itezhi-tezhi, Lusiwasi, Kalungwishi, Kabompo, and Lunzua power stations. To complement hydropower, government is exploring other forms of energy including solar, wind, and biomass, especially for use in rural areas.

Mr. Speaker,

The performance of the petroleum sub-sector has been favourable this year. The supply of petroleum products has been steady and reliable. As I alluded to earlier, government introduced tax measures to stabilise petroleum prices.

Mr. Speaker,

Progress has also been made towards building storage facilities for the strategic fuel reserves with the completion of the 40,000 metric tonnes Tazama diesel storage tank. This storage space will give our country the ability to store up to thirty days of strategic stock. Further, my government will rehabilitate provincial storage facilities across the country. This will help stabilise the supply of fuel.

MINES AND MINERALS DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Speaker,

Mining has remained a key sector of the economy with exports of mineral products contributing

about 70 percent of total foreign exchange earnings. Mining in 2008 contributed 8.4 percent to the GDP, and currently contributes about 58,000 direct jobs to the formal employment sector. This employment figure is likely to increase as exploration activities and expansion plans in existing mines materialise.

Mr. Speaker,

The mining sector recorded a slow down in the financial year 2008-2009. Recently, however, the industry has shown signs of recovery. In terms of copper production, there was an increase from about 276,000 tonnes in the first half of 2008 to 319,00 tonnes for the same period in 2009. In addition, mine operators who intended to close down have now reversed their position. The increase in the price of copper on the world market has also had a positive impact on the sector, with mining companies planning to increase production.

Mr. Speaker,

Another positive development in the sector has been the resumption of operations at Luanshya Copper Mines Plc and Maamba Collieries Limited. The resumption of operations at Luanshya Copper Mines followed its acquisition by a strategic equity partner in June 2009. In addition, the development of the Muliashi oxide deposits will increase the number of jobs at this mine.

Mr. Speaker,

Investors have also shown interest in the Munali nickel mine that had been placed under care and maintenance. I wish to inform the House that this mine will soon be reopened.

Mr. Speaker,

Maamba Collieries Limited, which was non-operational for some time, has also resumed operations, while Zambia Consolidate Copper Mine –Investment Holding ZCCM-IH is negotiating with a strategic equity partner to buy the mine. Notwithstanding, the mine is still facing operational problems that need to be resolved.

Mr. Speaker,

To extend the lives of Nkana and Nchanga, mining work has commenced on resource replacement projects.

Mr. Speaker,

Turning to hydrocarbon exploration, government has advertised blocs in western, northwestern, and eastern Provinces for oil and gas exploration, which is expected to start soon. Government intends to extend gas and oil exploration to the other parts of the country as a way of diversifying the economy.

Mr. Speaker,

My government will endeavour to promote investments in the small-scale mining sector and the marketing of gemstones to broaden the tax base and create new jobs. My government will also endeavour to enhance exploration of other minerals, particularly of the industrial ones. For example, manganese in Luapula and Northwestern Provinces and uranium in Southern Province.

WINDFALL TAX

Mr. Speaker,

The House will recall that in 2008, government revoked the mining development agreements and consequently changed the mining fiscal regime by way of amendment to the Mines and Minerals Act. These changes raised concerns among mining companies. In an effort to address these concerns, my government has commenced negotiations with mining companies with a goal of finding a solution.

Mr. Speaker,

I wish to inform the House that the negotiations are proceeding well. May I also reiterate the government's position that the removal of the Windfall Tax will not lead to a loss of government revenue, as the Variable Tax still captures any windfall gain that may arise in the mining sector.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Speaker,

My government recognizes the high cost of infrastructure. To this effect, government wishes to encourage private sector participation in infrastructure. To facilitate the implementation of this policy, Parliament enacted the Public-Private Partnership Act during its last sitting. I, therefore, call upon the private sector to join government in developing infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker,

In the road sector, government has continued to rehabilitate and maintain roads countrywide. Among the roads under rehabilitation are: Zimba-Livingstone, Choma-Chitongo, Kasempa turn-off, Kabompo-Chavuma, Kasama-Luwingu, Luansobe-Mpongwe, Chipata-Lundazi, Kasama-Mbala, and Chipata Mfuwe.

In addition, government will this year complete the redesigning of the bridges on the Mongu-Kalabo Road in readiness for commencement of works next year. Further, government intends to invite the private sector to join in development of the Pedicle, Mbala-Nakonde, Senanga-Sesheke, and Kasempa-Mumbwa roads.

Mr. Speaker,

The distribution of government construction equipment to all provinces has facilitated the grading of existing feeder roads and opening up of new ones, for easy movement of goods and services in rural areas. As a result, feeder road rehabilitation and opening of new roads is currently going on in most parts of the country. Government will provide additional resources next year to ensure that the feeder road programme is consolidated.

Mr. Speaker,

Government is concerned with the decline in the performance of the railway sector. The railway systems of Zambia and the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Authority have continued to experience challenges mainly due to the poor state of railway infrastructure. Government is engaging with the

railway systems of Zambia on modalities for the rehabilitation of the railway line. Regarding Tazara, the governments of Tanzania and Zambia have agreed that the operations of Tazara should be concessioned to a private operator.

Mr. Speaker,

Government continues to encourage private sector participation in the construction of feeder rail lines including Chipata-Mpika, Nseluka-Mpulungu, Solwezi-Chingola, Solwezi-Lumwana-Benguela, Mulobezi-Namibia, and Kafue-lion's den.

Mr. Speaker,

In addition to the infrastructure projects that I mentioned earlier, others include the rehabilitation of Solwezi Airport.

Mr. Speaker,

My administration is also encouraging private sector participation in the provision of telecommunication services and products. The recent enactment of the Information Communication Technology (ICT) legislation will enhance developments in this sector.

My government, in its efforts to expand the telecommunications backbone, has laid an optic fiber network across the country. All the nine provinces have been connected, and the second phase to link all districts is now underway.

Mr. Speaker,

Following the valuation of assets of Zambia Telecommunication Company (ZamTel), the government has decided to sell some of the shares of the company. This move will help ZamTel realise its full potential and become competitive.

Mr. Speaker,

Zambia recently hosted a high-level conference on resource mobilization for the North-South Corridor Project under the auspices of the COMESA-SADC-East African Community Tripartite framework. A substantial amount of money was pledged for infrastructure development within the confines of the north-south cor-

ridor, which includes Zambia. This regional initiative is important to improve access to the sea for countries, like Zambia, that are landlocked.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. Speaker,

Government is aware of the many challenges encountered in the health and education sectors. Notwithstanding the current economic difficulties, the government is committed to ensuring that these sectors are given priority in the allocation of resources.

HEALTH

Mr. Speaker,

In my last address, I stated that efforts would be made to improve health delivery. To this effect, my government increased budgetary allocation to this sector. In addition, beginning next year, funds will be disbursed directly to hospitals and district health administrations in order to ensure that these are available at the point of health service delivery.

Mr. Speaker,

The distribution of health and other facilities in this country is still skewed towards urban areas. Over 50 percent of Zambian families based in rural areas live outside a radius of five kilometers from the nearest health facility, as compared to 1 percent of families living in urban areas.

To address this situation, the government is investing in infrastructure development and provision of medical equipment countrywide. This year, construction of fifteen hospitals in various districts is underway. My government is also constructing health posts that are smaller than health centres in areas with catchment populations of 500 households or 3,000 people. Government has this year constructed ten out of the eighteen planned health posts in eight districts.

Mr. Speaker,

In view of the shortage of static health infrastructure in the country, delivery of healthcare

through mobile health services is necessary.

Currently, mobile health services include the Zambia Flying Doctors, eye and dental clinics, counseling and testing clinics, and antiretroviral therapy clinics. Drawing on the success of the Itetzhi Tezhi District Mobile Services Initiative, which received an award from the United Nations for its outstanding performance, government is further exploring the feasibility of delivering more mobile health services.

Mr. Speaker,

HIV/AIDS continues to negatively impact development. In an effort to address this problem, government scaled up provision of antiretrovirals (ARVs) to 64 percent of the total number of people in need of such drugs. This programme continues to be encouraged.

Mr. Speaker,

Zambia has made significant progress in combating malaria, a major fatal disease among children. This has been illustrated by the recognition that was given to Zambia by the World Health Organisation for reducing malaria in health facilities by 66 percent.

Mr. Speaker,

In order to provide improved quality and affordable cancer treatment, the construction of phase two of the Cancer Diseases Hospital in Lusaka is scheduled to commence before the end of this year. This is meant to improve the facilities, equipment, and human resources at this specialised hospital. In addition, my government is also constructing the Lusaka General Hospital at a cost of \$9.4 million at Chainama Hills.

Mr. Speaker,

The shortage of staff in the health sector remains one of the government's major concerns. Government continues to improve the conditions of service for staff to address this concern. To this extent, the retention scheme operating in the health section has been expanded to cover all health workers throughout the country. For the hard-to-reach areas, government has constructed

staff houses, and procured solar panels, radio communication equipment, and motor bikes for 560 health centres.

Mr. Speaker,

Further, to address the shortage of skilled health workers, a recruitment programme has been initiated to improve the staffing levels in health institutions. The expansion of classrooms and hostels at health training centres has also resulted in a 75 percent increase in the enrollment of students.

EDUCATION

Mr. Speaker,

In our efforts to ensure the attainment of the universal basic education goal, and to improve the quality of and access to education, this year government has recruited 5,000 more teachers who have since been deployed across the country.

In addition my government is constructing new schools to increase enrollment and reduce the distances covered to the nearest school. By the end of this year, government will have completed the construction of 2,543 classroom blocks and delivered 196,428 desks to the various Districts in the country.

To address the shortage of teacher accommodation, 280 houses are under construction in various parts of the country, which is aimed at improving the conditions of service for teachers and attracting them to work in rural areas.

Mr. Speaker,

At the tertiary level, upgrading of infrastructure at Nkrumah and Copperbelt Secondary Teachers Colleges to university-level has continued. The first university college classes at these institutions will commence immediately after all formalities have been concluded.

Mr. Speaker,

While the opening up of this sector has seen a number of players who are supplementing government's efforts, there is concern with the many illegal and sub-standard learning institutions that have sprung up.

My government, through the Ministry of Education, in its quest to uplift the standards of education in our learning institutions, therefore, is finalizing the national qualification and accreditation framework.

THE PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED

Mr. Speaker,

In our society, there are those who are physically challenged and who have special needs. My government aims to create an environment where all these citizens can live full economic and social lives.

I am thus directing the planning authorities to ensure that public buildings across the country have provisions to accommodate special needs for the physically challenged such as wheelchair ramps, lifts, rest rooms, etc. I am also directing the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services to consider developing special training programmes for the physically challenged to equip them with skills to enable them participate fully in economic activities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING

Mr. Speaker,

The lack of safe water supply and adequate sanitation facilities in the country remains an area of major concern. Nonetheless, progress has been made in the implementation of the National Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme launched in November 2007. So far, drilling of new water points and rehabilitation of existing ones in the Lusaka, Northern, Luapula, and Southern Provinces have been completed. This programme will help the country in the provision of safe and adequate water and sanitation services on a sustainable basis.

Mr. Speaker,

One of the worrying trends in local governance is increase of succession disputes in chiefdoms. I would like to appeal to the royal establishments to institute acceptable modes of succession. My government wishes to make it clear that it will only recognise the current registered 286

chiefdoms. May I emphasize that my government will not recognise new chiefs. In the same vein, government will not allow illegal parallel structures to be set up. Regarding chiefdom boundary disputes, government's policy still remains that these shall be resolved using the 1958 Chiefdom Boundary maps.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Mr. Speaker,

The management of disasters in the country has been a big challenge in the absence of a legal framework in which to operate.

Mr. Speaker,

My government intends to present before this House the Disaster Management Bill. The bill will seek to provide a legal framework for the marshalling of the resources in times of disasters.

LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Speaker,

The labour and employment sector is faced with a number of challenges that include poor observance of workers' rights by some employers. The House will agree that the need to create more jobs on one hand needs to be balanced with productivity on the other.

Mr. Speaker,

Government is concerned with the spate of wild-cat strikes that the nation has experienced in the recent past. I, therefore, urge all parties, the employers, labour leaders, and government to fully and effectively utilize the tripartite mechanism provided for under the Industrial and Labour Relations Act to amicably resolve disputes.

Mr. Speaker,

This year the nation experienced strikes by our public workers who were demanding salary increments far above what government could realistically afford. The current public wage bill is more than 50 percent of domestic revenue. This means that 1 percent of the population, or 170,000 people, consume more than half of our

budget. It is important for members of this House to reflect on the sustainability of personal emoluments for public sector workers.

I must caution that we cannot as a nation continue depending on our cooperating partners for our economic development. Our cooperating partners are also facing difficult challenges in their countries. As Zambians, we must rely on our own resources to achieve our vision. I therefore call upon all of us—Ministers, Members of Parliament, and civil servants—to sacrifice by not demanding unrealistic salaries.

DIASPORA

Mr. Speaker,

Following the presentation by our citizens in the Diaspora at the national indaba held earlier this year, I have decided to set up a liaison office at the State House to deal with issues related to the Diaspora. In addition, I have directed the Minister of Finance to work with the Diaspora to facilitate their participation in growing the economy through investment in projects of their choice. From the many meetings I have had with Zambians abroad, I am convinced that our people, wherever they may be, are proud Zambians, and we should embrace them as they wish to participate in the building of our economy.

PUBLIC SERVICE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Speaker,

Government has continued to implement the Public Service Reform Programme aimed at strengthening the operations, management capabilities, efficiency, and effectiveness of the public service. A recently introduced component of the reform programme is the establishment of service delivery charters. All ministries and other public service institutions are expected to establish charters that constitute social contracts between public service institutions and the public.

Mr. Speaker,

I am delighted to note that a number of ministries, departments, and other public service institutions have developed their charters.

Mr. Speaker,

During my last address to this House, I noted that the public service was faced with, among other things, the challenge of inadequate remuneration in the face of limited resources. To deal with this, a public service pay policy has been drafted and will be tabled in Cabinet soon. This policy is an essential input into the recently announced Salaries and Wages Commission's work of developing a comprehensive framework of the salaries structure in the public service.

GENDER

Mr. Speaker,

My government and all of us in this House remain determined to attain gender equity and equality in our country as contained in the Vision 2030 and the National Gender Policy.

You will recall that during the last session, I stated that I would appoint women on merit. I have since appointed a number of women to senior government positions as testimony to the confidence I have in our women to take up positions of leadership. I will therefore continue to appoint more women to positions of leadership.

Mr. Speaker,

You will also recall that during the same session, I indicated that considerable progress had been made in developing legislation on gender-based violence. To this effect, government has since availed a draft bill on this to key stakeholders for their input.

Mr. Speaker,

Government recognizes that there has been progress in gender and development, though more work is needed to ensure that gender is systematically mainstreamed in policy and programmes. Consequently, my government has decided to give the Ministry of Gender its own budget allocation in next year's budget.

SPORT, YOUTH, AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Speaker,

The majority of our population consists of young people. The challenge government faces, therefore, is providing social amenities and employment for the youth. In this regard, government will enhance the provision of demand-driven skills and training opportunities for self-employment.

Currently, eight youth resource centres are under construction in six provinces for this purpose. This is in addition to the sixteen existing ones. Under this programme, priority will be given to promotion of entrepreneurship skills and provision of start-up capital.

Mr. Speaker,

The House will recall that in my last address, I had reported that the defence forces had successfully completed training some of our youths at the Zambia National Service Training Centres. This programme is continuing, and more young people stand to benefit from it.

Mr. Speaker,

In the field of sport, I am glad to inform this House that government launched the National Sports Policy in May 2009, whose aim is to increase people's participation and make sport more inclusive.

Following my government's undertaking to construct sports facilities, I wish to inform the House that, apart from the construction of the Ndola Stadium, which has commenced, government intends to construct a new stadium in Lusaka as soon as funds are secured.

Mr. Speaker,

In considering the resources being made available to the youths, we should include the resources available to youths across the various sectors of the economy, such as those under education, health, etc. All these expenditures put together benefit the youth and should be recognised as such.

GOVERNANCE

Mr. Speaker,

I recently launched the Anti-Corruption Policy as a clear commitment to fighting corruption.

Mr. Speaker,

Corruption continues to be a major concern to my government and indeed to all development-minded persons and institutions. This is even more so given the recent revelations of mismanagement of public resources in some ministries. Fighting corruption, therefore, remains a top priority of government. But let me reiterate that this fight is not for government alone. All of us should join in the fight against corruption.

The recently launched national Anti-Corruption Policy is aimed at addressing several challenges at the institutional, social, and legal levels. The policy will, among other things, reaffirm the Anti-Corruption Commission's role as the leading institution in the fight against corruption. The policy will lay emphasis on proactive measures to prevent corruption from occurring.

In this respect, I recently announced a number of measures to strengthen the fight against corruption. These include the establishment of a Serious Fraud Unit under the strengthened Anti-Corruption Commission to specifically investigate complex corruption cases and an independent financial intelligence unit to monitor suspicious financial transactions. In addition, forensic systems shall be developed and procurement audits shall be undertaken in all major spending ministries, provinces, and agencies.

Mr. Speaker,

I wish to reiterate my earlier warning to all public officers, including members of my government, that I will not hesitate to take action against those found wanting.

Mr. Speaker,

When I addressed the House in January of this year, I informed the nation that government had inaugurated the National Governing Council (NGC) of the African Peer Review Mechanism

(APRM). The APRM process is working effectively and is already assisting government to enhance democracy and good governance.

This fact was attested to by the findings of the Country Support Mission for the APRM, which reviewed Zambia's progress in the implementation of the APRM this year. Government has reorganized the NGC and reduced membership from forty-seven to thirty in order to reduce on expenditure and improve efficiency.

Mr. Speaker,

Government is committed to the provision of access to justice for all. This House may already be aware that the Legal Aid Board is in the process of establishing offices in all the provincial centres in the country. Eventually, offices will be established in districts as well.

CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW PROCESS

Mr. Speaker,

The National Constitutional Conference (NCC) has made progress. Government is committed to ensuring that the Constitution-writing process is concluded soon. This is an important exercise that requires the support of every Zambian.

However, I am concerned with the slow pace at which the NCC deliberations are going. I wish to inform the House that the twelve-month mandate that was given to NCC expired. I have since given the NCC a four-month extension in which to complete its deliberations. It is my hope that the men and women sitting on the NCC will sacrifice their time to enable them to complete the exercise within this extension.

ELECTORAL REFORMS

Mr. Speaker,

In my last address to the House, I indicated government's commitment to continuous voter registration. Government has since disbursed funds to the Electoral Commission of Zambia towards this exercise. My government is working to ensure that the voters' register is updated in

readiness for the 2011 elections. I direct that a permanent mechanism be established for this exercise as provided for under the law.

MEDIA

Mr. Speaker,

My administration recognises the important role the media plays in the development of the country. Government will, therefore, continue to provide a conducive environment under which the media functions. I wish to commend those radio and television stations that have conducted themselves in a responsible and ethical manner in performing their duties. It is pleasing to note that while other media organisations have exhibited unethical journalism, the majority have remained professional. I congratulate them.

Mr. Speaker,

It is with this in mind that government has engaged the media on the need for self-regulation, as I stated in my last address to this House. In order to expedite this process, government has invited the media to discuss ways of enhancing self-regulation.

Mr. Speaker,

Consultations on the Freedom of Information Bill have reached an advanced stage. I am calling upon members of the public to take keen interest in the development so that the proposed law meets their aspirations.

Mr. Speaker,

In order to increase outreach and diversity of information, government has commenced the decentralization of the print media to all provincial headquarters by procuring printing presses for the provinces. These machines will also be accessible to the members of the public.

Mr. Speaker,

I wish to inform this House that my government is considering a policy shift with regard to media ownership. My government is assessing the possibility of considering privatising some of the state-owned media organisations. This deci-

sion will help in enhancing competition in the media industry.

FOREIGN POLICY

Mr. Speaker,

In line with our foreign policy, Zambia remains committed to supporting efforts that will contribute to lasting international peace and security. For this reason, Zambia continues to play an active role in international and regional organisations including the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

The House will recall that Zambia assumed the chairmanship of the Great Lakes region at its Third Summit, which was held here in Lusaka on August 10, 2009. During the event, I was privileged to launch the Regional Centre for Democracy, Good Governance, Human Rights, and Civic Education, to be located in Lusaka. The centre has been named in honour of our late president, Dr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, SC.

Mr. Speaker,

I wish to inform the House that Zambia was also elected as Deputy Chair of the SADC's organ on politics, defense, and security at the last ordinary summit held in Kinshasa this month. This election is an honour for Zambia.

Mr. Speaker,

In view of Zambia's focus on economic diplomacy, the government has continued to be an active participant in South-South and North-South Partnership Initiatives. As a result of Zambia's participation at the highest level of these international economic forums, Zambia has attracted increased interest from European and Asian firms wishing to trade with and invest in Zambia.

Mr. Speaker,

The issue of explosive remnants of war (mines and munitions) has been high on the international agenda. Despite Zambia's internal peace, she has

suffered contamination of explosive remnants as a result of the wars in some neighbouring countries. Government is concerned that some parts of the country are still contaminated.

However, I am pleased to inform this House that government has completed the nationwide survey to identify contaminated areas. This will enhance government's efforts in sensitisation of our people and clearance of explosive remnants of war. The clearance of affected areas is important as this will enhance the safety of our people and open up areas for development.

PEACE AND SECURITY

Mr. Speaker,

The peace we continue to enjoy is partly due to the commendable role that our security institutions play in our nation. Not only have they served with diligence here at home, but they have also done us proud in international peacekeeping missions. I, therefore, salute our men and women in the security wings for the role they continue to play in protecting our nation's sovereignty. Their work has not only been focused on security, but also contributed to maintenance of infrastructure and provision of food, especially in times when the nation has been faced with disaster situations.

Mr. Speaker,

Government is aware of the urgent need to look into the welfare of men and women in the security services. I reiterate my assurances that we are working to address their concerns. In this regard, the government will continue building houses for the security wings. To ease their accommodation shortfalls, a number of these houses will be ready for occupation by the end of this year.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker,

To conclude, I wish to remind the nation, through this House, that the global economic situation continues to place challenges on our economy. However, we should all bear in mind that there is no problem insurmountable to a

resolute and united people. I, therefore, wish to reiterate my call for all Zambians, regardless of their political affiliation, tribe, race, or religious background, to remain united in our fight against the common enemies of poverty, disease, hunger, and illiteracy.

Mr. Speaker,

The nation expects us, as representatives of the people, to work across party lines for the good of the nation.

Next month, the Honourable Minister of Finance and National Planning will present the 2010 Budget to this House. Indeed, government will make proposals to this House intended to improve the management of our resources for the well-being of our people. However, these proposals will amount to nothing if they are not supported by this august House. More than ever before, we need to work together for our common purpose. As government, we commit ourselves to working with all stakeholders.

Once more, I wish to pay tribute to all Zambians for upholding peace and stability in our nation. I urge all of us to individually and collectively commit ourselves to working towards a prosperous future.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, let me pay tribute to our international cooperating and other partners for the support they have rendered. Some of our achievements as a country would not have been possible if it were not for the support and the warm and fraternal relations that we enjoy at both bilateral and multilateral levels. I can only urge our partners to continue with this spirit.

Finally, may I also express my profound appreciation to my Cabinet and Deputy Ministers, Secretary to the Cabinet and his team, and my staff at the State House for the loyalty and support they have rendered to me from the time I assumed the Office of President. I say thank you. May you continue with the good work.

Mr. Speaker,

May God bless Zambia. May God bless our people. I thank you.



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NOTES
