

**SPEECH BY UNICEF REPRESENTATIVE CARRIE AUER AT THE  
OFFICIAL CLOSING OF THE 8<sup>TH</sup> MALAWI CHILDREN'S PARLIAMENT  
9<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2009**

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The Speaker of Parliament Hon. Henry Chimunthu Banda,

The Speaker of the Malawi Children's Parliament,

The Minister of Women, Children and Community Development, Hon. Patricia  
Kaliati, MP

The Principal Secretary in the Ministry, Mrs. Olive Chikankheni,

Distinguished Members of the Malawi Children's Parliament,

Members of the Press,

Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of UNICEF, I wish to welcome thank you all for the tremendous efforts you have put into the successful hosting of the 8<sup>th</sup> session of the Malawi Children's Parliament. In particular, I would like to thank the child MPs for the zeal and enthusiasm they have demonstrated in these last three days. They have shown once again that the Children's Parliament continues to be a very

important institution in Malawi's efforts to protect and nurture the rights of children.

This year's Children's Parliament is special because it comes soon after the world, including Malawi, has just commemorated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Many of you in this room were not yet born when the world adopted the CRC on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1989. However, the fact that you are gathered here this week is a result of the progress we have made since 1989.

In keeping with article 12 of the CRC, this forum affords you the children the opportunity to discuss, debate and pass resolutions on important issues your lives. You also have a represent the views of your families, communities and the larger society in which you live.

It is gratifying to note that you have used your time here to take stock of what Malawi has achieved in the last 20 years, what are some of the gaps and challenges remaining, and how you as child parliamentarians can contribute to creating a better Malawi for children. I am convinced that gathered in this room are some of the best and brightest of Malawi's children. It is therefore an honour to hear your views and opinions on the critical issues facing children and how these can be addressed.

We believe that the best interests of the child are best served when children's voices are heard and their opinion included in development. I therefore want to underscore UNICEF's commitment to continue supporting the

Children's Parliament. However, I would like to see resolutions emerging from here forwarded to the relevant authorities for action or feedback. If there is an area the Children's Parliament needs to improve upon, it is ensuring effective follow-up to the resolutions.

I am therefore confident that, together with our partners in the Ministry of Gender, we will seek to build stronger links between the Children's Parliament and the Malawi Parliament. One possible avenue is to establish a secretariat of the Children's Parliament in the National Assembly, thereby taking advantage of the resources and comparative advantages that Parliament already has.

Let me end, Honourable Minister, by thanking your Ministry for working so hard to organize this session. We will continue to count on your leadership, especially in strengthening the Children's Parliament so that it is heard and respected as the voice and conscience of Malawi's children.

Zikomo!