

SPEECH

**BY THE UNICER REPRESENTATIVE MS. CARRIE AUER AT THE
SIGNING OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH MBC**

AND ZODIAK,

LILONGWE,

5TH OCTOBER 2010

The Director-General of Malawi Broadcasting Corporation, Mr. Bright Malopa,

The Director of Zodiak Broadcasting, Mr. Gospel Kazako,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

We in UNICEF feel greatly honoured to be here this morning to sign Memoranda of Understanding with the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation and Zodiak Broadcasting, two very important media outlets in Malawi.

Today's occasion marks an important milestone in UNICEF's relationship with the media. It transforms what has sometimes looked like a client/provider relationship into a mutually beneficial partnership between ourselves and the two media outlets.

This is in keeping with how we have always viewed the role of the mass media in promoting the fulfillment of children's rights. The challenges children face are enormous and if the lives of children are to be improved, then we need to create effective partnerships with the mass media.

This is because many of the challenges children face have to do with a lack of information. The media therefore play an important role in sensitizing communities about important issues that affect the lives and wellbeing of children. It means the media recognizing these challenges and playing a more socially-conscious role by supporting efforts to tackle these challenges.

Of the various media available in Malawi, the radio medium stands out in terms of reach, accessibility, ease of use and reliability. Various media surveys conducted in this country have consistently shown that MBC and Zodiak are the leading radio stations in terms of overall geographical coverage as well as being the preferred radio stations by a majority of the audience. In a country where about 65 percent of all households own a radio, this is hugely significant.

It is therefore not strange that we have chosen to partner with these two media houses to advance the rights of women and children in this country. Under this agreement, we will work together to develop high

quality programs, jingles and other materials that promote the adoption of positive and healthy behaviour and social change.

We are confident that the production and airing of such high quality materials will help Malawi to increase the adoption of high impact interventions among caregivers and mothers, improve the promotion of children's rights and child participation through quality radio broadcasts, contribute to the reduction of HIV transmission, and increase school enrolments and retention.

In addition, through this partnership, we strengthen the capacity of MBC and Zodiak to carry out effective programming through training, provision of technical support as well as provision of relevant information and supplies.

We are committed to the success of this partnership and look forward to a fruitful collaboration with MBC and Zodiak.

Zikomo.