



SPEECH BY

**HER EXCELLENCY DR. JOYCE BANDA
STATE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI**

DURING

**CLOSING CEREMONY OF
THE AFRICAN LEADERS FORUM
ON INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY**

AT

**BINGU INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE
LILONGWE**

MONDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY, 2014

- **Your Excellency Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe;**
- **Your Excellency, Chief Justice Richard Banda, SC, (Retired);**
- **The Rt Honourable Khumbo Hastings Kachali, Vice President of the Republic of Malawi;**
- **Dr. Timothy Shriver, Chairman of the Board, Special Olympics International;**

- **Distinguished guests,
dignitaries, leaders, friends,
and the athletes of Special
Olympics:**

We have now come to the closing of the African Leaders Forum on Disability after two days of intense and fruitful activities here in Lilongwe.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Malawi, and indeed, on my own behalf, I would like to express my profound gratitude to Your Excellency and Dear Brother President Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe; and to Heads of Delegation, and to all delegates for the dedication and commitment demonstrated at this important Forum meeting.

I wish to congratulate all the delegates for the formation of the **African Leadership Alliance on Intellectual Disabilities** which will provide an important forum and mechanism for advocacy and action on the campaign for people with disabilities.

I wish to assure Your Excellency and all the delegates that Malawi Government is ready and willing to provide all the necessary leadership for the success of the African Leadership Alliance on Intellectual Disabilities ensuring that we realise its goals and objectives.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

We conclude this Forum wiser and inspired by our collective determination and commitment to take into account the segment of our population that for centuries has been a subject of

discrimination, marginalization, stigmatization, contempt and often times abuse.

Today marks the beginning of a new era as the world seeks a new world order. A new world order that is just and fair to all. A new world order that provides space for all regardless of physical and mental condition to realize their destiny and exploit their full potential. A new world order that is built on the principle of inclusivity, fairness, morality and humanity.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

This Forum is saying that every child, of every ability level, must have access to primary and secondary education.

This Forum is saying every child, and their families, must have full access to health services, and important development initiatives like early stimulation, early childhood development, and care. This presents a great relief to parents, guardians and caregivers to know that their clinics, their hospitals, and their social centres are places of welcome to them and their children: free from stigma, free from judgment, and full of understanding.

This Forum is saying we need to increase training and awareness for doctors, midwives, and all allied health care professionals so that throughout the life cycle, our children and adults with disabilities can count on a health system that has been sensitized to their needs.

It is indeed pleasing to note the voice of this Forum in calling for equal access to recreation and play.

I am pleased to note that organizations like UNICEF are increasingly placing great development importance on allowing children to experience a childhood. I cannot agree more; as what characterize childhood are fun, recreation and play.

Your Excellency. Distinguished ladies and Gentlemen

Through the vision of another female leader, Mrs. Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics has shown the world that through play, an innovative development model is in full motion in over 180 countries around the world. It is serving some 4,000,000 individuals with intellectual disabilities. We have seen that through play, doctors are activated, youth are mobilized, policies are passed, stigma is eliminated, communities are engaged, and implementation becomes widespread.

It is for this reason that I am committing here today to sign the first-ever **National Partnership Agreement** in the history of Special Olympics Africa- together with Special Olympics Malawi- to further strengthen our National Disability Act to connect good policy to better practice.

Your Excellency, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to note that this Forum has recognized the need for financial, technical, emotional, and political commitment.

Earlier today, we heard a bold but simple challenge from Dr. Timothy Shriver, one in which he called for resources and funding to meet the needs of people with intellectual

disabilities at least equal to the percentage of the national population they represent.

Once again, it is with humility and pride that I congratulate this Forum as I offer myself and the Government of Malawi to advocate for the **LILONGWE DECLARATION**, a formal framework which will guide the programme of action for the African Leaders Alliance on Intellectual Disabilities.

This declaration is a partnership between and among Governments, private sector, civil society organizations and development partners. It demands of all of us to step up into action.

In conclusion, let me once again; state that my Government is greatly honoured to assume the Chairmanship of the African Leadership

Alliance on Disabilities. Our primary goal will be to advance the Alliance's goals and objectives.

I have been assured of support from all of you. In that regard, I am encouraged to continue the push for a better life for all of the people with disabilities on our Continent.

With these remarks, I would like to declare that the African Leaders Forum on Disability is formally closed.

I wish Your Excellencies and all the distinguished delegates a safe trip back home.

Thank you for your attention.