

**Remarks at the Opening of the National Validation Workshop
on the Revised Fisheries Policy and Implementation Plan**

Address by Jan Rijpma,

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- **Minister of Agriculture and Food Security: Hon Peter Mwanza**
- **The Secretary for Agriculture and Food Security, Mr. Jeffrey Luhanga,**
- **. Director Fisheries Department**
- **Director of relevant Departments and other Senior Government Officials,**
- **Civil Society Organizations,**
- **Members of the Private Sector,**
- **Academia**
- **Members of the Press**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to deliver the Opening Remarks at this Validation Workshop for the Fisheries Policy and its Implementation Plan

We are happy to be involved in this exercise, as it underlines our contribution towards Sustainable Economic Growth, as articulated in the MGDS-II and the new United Nations Development Assistance Framework, or UNDAF, for 2012 - 2016.

Fisheries is of course hugely important in Malawi, with some 20% of its surface area composed of water, over 500,000 being directly involved in the fisheries sector, and fish providing 40% of protein intake for Malawi.

But the sector is also beset by challenges: the fish consumption of Malawians has decreased by 60% over the last 3 – 4 decades, the 60,000 fishers are struggling to keep up their fish catches, and all this compounded by current economic challenges and continuing resources degradation.

It is therefore timely to revise the current Fisheries Policy that dates from 2001, to take into account these challenges, but also tap into the existing opportunities.

UNDP is coming into this exercise from the Environment and Natural Resources Management angle. We have supported this work mainly through the UNEP-UNDP Poverty environment

Initiative, that looks at the nexus between environmental management and poverty reduction. A landmark study was done under this project: The “Economic Valuation of Sustainable Natural Resources Use in Malawi”. This report established that UNsustainable use of natural resources costs Malawi 5.3% of its GDP every year, or some 191 million USD. This was largely related to soil erosion, but reduced fish catches also played a significant role in this loss.

Under the PEI project we have also supported the integration of sustainability indicators into the M&E Framework for the Agricultural SWAp, and some of those indicators related to fisheries and aquaculture production. The above considerations necessitated for us the need to review the 2001 National Fisheries Policy so as to include these poverty and environment linkages.

Apart from the Poverty – Environment angle, UNDP also looks at this Policy and its implementation from a broader resilience perspective, spurred on by the on-going food security challenges. From the UN Humanitarian perspective, UNDP is mandated to look at Early Recovery in case of disasters or emergencies. In this light, UNDP has been instrumental to facilitate the drafting of a “Resilience Strategy for Food Security”, together with Government and UN system, that has recently been launched. Fisheries needs to be an integral element in such a strategy.

I would like to applaud the Department of Fisheries to have undertaken this work, in an efficient manner, as I have been made to understand. The work was continuation of efforts by the World Bank to review the Fisheries Policy, and the coordination and continuity is well appreciated. We would also like to thank FAO for their substantive comments. I would like to thank my colleagues from the PEI Project for their effective support, and I thank of course the overarching Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security for ensuring the policy comes with an implementation plan and a Master Plan for the fisheries sector. In general, I thank all the stakeholders for their participation thus far.

This Validation Workshop is now an important event to take this further. We will look here at the draft policy and implementation plan in detail, and will provide necessary feedback. I hope that we will not lose the momentum generated, and will offer constructive and pertinent comments, that can be incorporated in the Policy. This then will be, under the guidance of the Policy Unit in OPC, be presented to the PSs for further endorsement and eventually we hope this will become effective soon, as the fisheries sector is waiting for further guidance to take up the challenges.

I wish you fruitful deliberations.