



Malawi Government

SPEECH BY

**HONOURABLE KONDWANI NANKHUMWA, M.P.,
MINISTER OF INFORMATION, TOURISM AND CULTURE**

DURING

***THE RECEIVING OF A PETITION FOR ELEPHANT AND
RHINO MARCH,***

3RD OCTOBER 2014, LILONGWE

- The Principal Secretary for Tourism and Culture;
- Chair of the Inter agency Committee on Combating Wildlife Crime;
- The Representatives of Civil Society particularly WESM, WAG & Wildlife Centre;
- The Heads of Department in Ministry and all members of staff here present;
- Members of the press;
- Ladies and gentlemen;

It gives me pleasure this morning, to preside over this very important occasion where concerned civil society organizations are marching for the plight of our iconic wildlife species such as elephants and rhino. I must say this is first of its kind in the history of Malawi. I would like, therefore, to thank you very much for the interest you have shown. I am told this walk for elephants and rhinos have been organized by the Wildlife and Environmental Society (WESM), Wildlife Action Group (WAG) and the Lilongwe Wildlife Centre.

Ladies and gentlemen I am aware that the global march for elephants and rhinos is a worldwide event and taking place on the 4th of October 2014 while here in Malawi it was decided to be take place today the 3rd October. This day is dedicated to promoting global awareness about the elephant crisis; advocating for an end to poaching in all regions where elephants live; working to shut down the ivory trade; and raise the level of human consciousness to embrace the lives of elephants and rhinos with reverence and humility.

I want to retaliate that the DPP led government acknowledges that poaching levels have increased in all African sub-regions whereby iconic species such as elephants and rhino have fallen victims. As a result of this, Malawi's elephant and rhinos stocks

continue to suffer the devastating impact of poaching and illegal ivory and rhino horn trade.

For instance, Malawi's population of elephants has decreased from around 4,000 in 1980s to less than 2,000 today due to increased activities of poaching and illegal wildlife trade. The rhino species became completely extinct in Malawi in the early 1980's but have since been re-introduced. However, some of the newly introduced rhinos have already been lost to poachers.

Ladies and gentlemen I want to agree with the organizers that the petition is indeed raising very pertinent issues which require the immediate attention of Government. The situation is dire as organized international crime syndicates are now targeting and exploiting Malawi as a source and transit route for illegal ivory trade. This is evidenced by several arrests of illegal ivory traffickers at the country's entry and exist points, which have recently been a common occurrence.

I am aware that wildlife crime has become a serious threat to the security, political stability, economy, natural resources and cultural heritage of many countries including Malawi. Government is, therefore, aware that this is detrimental to the economy as the government considers tourism as one of the economic growth sectors. As we are all aware that in this

country wildlife is the mainstay of tourism, with rampant poaching and illegal trade of iconic species tourism becomes impossible.

This is why I want to assure you the civil society that the Government of Malawi is taking seriously the issues you have raised and some of them are being addressed already. Allow me to mention just a few of the initiatives being addressed:

The government is providing high-level political commitment into efforts to help eradicate illegal wildlife trade and better protect its iconic species from the threat of extinction.

In 2013, Malawi subscribed to the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) which was established in September 2013 on conservation of African Elephant initiative, which is viewed as a strategic lobby platform for saving African elephants adding on to other existing lobby organizations against trade in elephant products.

I am happy to inform you that in line with Clinton initiative, from September 2013, Malawi announced a moratorium with regards to domestic ivory trade. In which case, there is no more domestic trade in ivory in this country.

Government further, takes seriously the London declaration on the illegal wildlife trade which, among others, endorses action of Governments which have destroyed seized ivory being traded illegally and further encourages those Governments that have stockpiles of illegal products, particularly of high-value items such as elephant ivory, to destroy.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is in view of this that Malawi is planning to join other countries to have its stock pile of seized ivory destroyed. As this may in the long run contribute seriously to poaching and illegal ivory trade.

I am pleased to inform you that following the London declaration, Malawi has a robust inter-agency law enforcement network on Combating wildlife Crime comprising the security organs of government in order to strengthen the law enforcement against poaching, and to enforce the ban on exports and imports of ivory products including the rhino horn. It is through the efforts of this Committee that we have seen court fines of some of the culprits getting up to MK1 million for the first time in the history of Malawi.

The government recognizes that the wildlife legislation is weak, as such, agrees with your observation that it gets substantial review. I am pleased to inform you that, with the support from

the German Government the Government is carrying out an assessment of its wildlife legal and policy frameworks with a possibility of amending the legislation to make poaching and wildlife trafficking “serious crimes” under the terms of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. These are some of the initiatives that government is undertaking.

Government indeed appreciates the efforts that you, the civil organizations are taking, to end the suffering of our iconic wildlife, particularly, elephants and rhinos. Once again, let me assure you that the petition is going to be delivered to the relevant authorities.

I thank you for your attention, may God bless you and Bless Malawi.