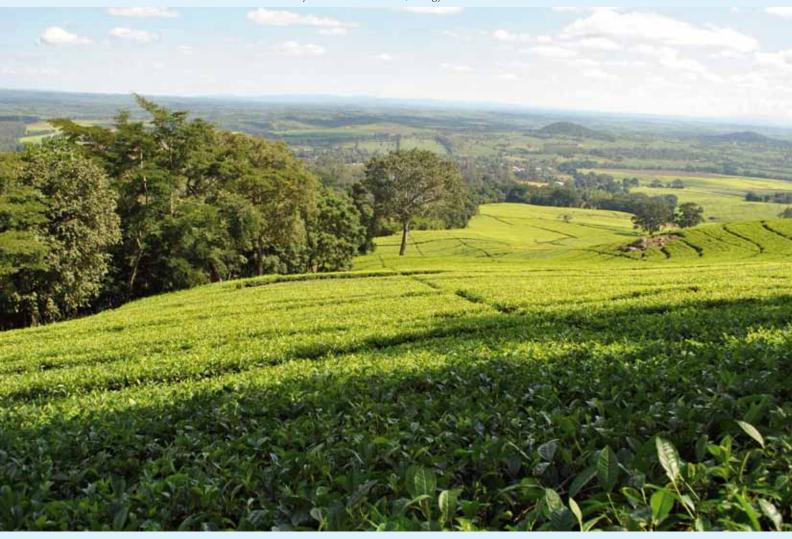


Malawi Government Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Environment



Malawi State of Environment and Outlook Report

Environment for Sustainable Economic Growth

2010











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Foreword



Malawi's economic development and the livelihoods of its population are largely dependent on natural resources. In order for the country to experience sustainable economic growth and alleviate poverty, Malawi must conserve its valuable environmental resources. Hence, the Malawi Government has taken various measures to safeguard the country's natural resource base. These include, inter alia, the enactment of the Environmental Management Act of 1996; the Forestry Policy of 1996; the Land Policy of 2002; the Water and Sanitation Policy of 2005; and the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of 2008.

Despite these efforts, the degradation of natural resources continues to be a major threat to the social and economic development of Malawi. Malawi's high population density and the dependence of Malawians on agricultural production in the absence of other economic opportunities have led to alarming rates of environmental

degradation. The result has been deforestation; decreasing soil fertility and increasing erosion; water depletion, loss of biodiversity; and increasing pollution. These poor environmental conditions are exacerbated by poverty: in order to subsist, a high proportion of the population relies on the exploitation of natural resources such as firewood and fish stocks.

The State of the Environment and Outlook Report 2010 aims to address these challenges in three ways. First, the report provides a knowledge resource for researchers and the general public. Secondly, it serves as a baseline for monitoring trends in environmental change in Malawi. Finally, and most importantly, the report is intended to inform policy-makers about the challenges facing Malawi; outline possible future scenarios for the environment and development; and provide policy recommendations to support the country's sustainable growth.

The 2010 Report is the culmination of an existing process of environmental reporting in the country. Since the passing of the Environment Management Act in 1996, districts have produced State of the Environment reports biannually. These reports have allowed the government to effectively target resource allocation through the development of relevant environmental action plans and environmental micro-projects. It is hoped that the State of the Environment and Outlook Report will increase awareness of environment and natural resources, and encourage effective resource allocation for sustainable development at the local and national levels. It will also enhance Malawi's participation in various inter-regional and international programmes and fora.

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Environmental Programme for supporting the report's development through the Poverty and Environment Initiative. My thanks also go to Leadership for the Environment and Development - Southern and Eastern Africa (LEAD SEA) and CEDRESSA for compiling the report. In addition, I would like to thank all those who made contributions to the report in various ways.

Grain W. Malunga, M.P. Minister of Natural Resources, Energy, and Environment

Preface



Malawi's continued economic and human development depends highly on the state of the country's environmental resources. In order for Malawians to make informed decisions about their development path, it is necessary to be able to continually assess the health of the natural resources that sustain the country. State of the Environment and Outlook Reports (SEOR) provide a key mechanism for so doing. The purpose of the SEOR is to inform and influence policy and planning processes – such as the implementation of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy and the Millennium Development Goals— regarding issues of sustainable natural resources management.

The report uses a thematic approach, evaluating a broad range of factors that influence environmental change in Malawi. Themes such as land and agriculture, forestry and woodlands, biodiversity and water resources were assessed using the scientifically valid and well-regarded Integrated Environmental Assessment (IEA)

approach. It is crucial for Malawi's policymakers to be able to anticipate how economic and population pressures will affect future development, and as such the 2010 State of the Environment and Outlook report also contains an "Outlook" component, which explores future options for the country's natural resources using scenarios. These scenarios are based on existing scientific knowledge, but adopt different assumptions about how critical uncertainties will unfold, in order to show the range of environmental situations that Malawi may face. The Outlook also assesses existing policy instruments and policy gaps in environmental management, in order to identify appropriate actions policymakers can take to support sustainable development.

The 2010 State of the Environment and Outlook was developed through a participatory and consultative approach. Stakeholders from the government, nongovernmental organizations, civil society, and research institutions were consulted throughout the process, and contributed to the selection of themes, development of scenarios and policy analysis, drafting process, and final analysis. As such, the 2010 SEOR is owned by a range of key stakeholders who have the ability to transform Malawi's environmental management and direct the country towards a sustainable future.

I am deeply grateful for the support of the UNDP and UNEP, which made the development of the 2010 SEOR possible while contributing to the expansion of our national capacity in environmental reporting.

Ben Botolo Principal Secretary of Natural Resources, Energy and Environment

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