



**5th WEEKLY RADIO ADDRESS BY
THE STATE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI,
HIS EXCELLENCY DR. LAZARUS McCARTHY CHAKWERA.
22nd AUGUST, 2020**

Fellow Malawians

Today, I want to talk about the situation faced by street vendors. Historically, the relationship between street vendors and law-enforcement agencies within our cities has been a contentious one. Just this week, street vendors within the capital city were told by the city authorities to move their benches away from unauthorized places like side walks and relocate to designated markets. Sadly, these running battles between city authorities and street vendors have become a yearly staple, which is clearly a sign that we need a more lasting solution to the problems our street vendors need us to solve.

As I understand it, the street vendors feel aggrieved every time they are forcefully removed from unauthorized places, and so when it happened again this week, they marched to the City Council to have their grievances heard. Not only should they be commended for marching peacefully, but also for raising such pertinent issues as the lack of space for plying their trade. I also commend the city authorities for

encouraging the vendors to always bring their need and request for space to the Council for processing rather than resorting to conducting their businesses illegally.

Still, in my view, we cannot build a New Malawi with beautiful cities if vendors and city authorities continue to treat each other as adversaries. The truth of the matter is that we cannot succeed in turning our cities into hubs of beauty, order, efficiency, and industry if business actors and state actors do not work together as partners to create innovative solutions to the functional challenges our cities are facing. But the first place to begin our work of redesigning our cities is to accept responsibility for the mess our cities are in. Finger-pointing and blame-shifting will get us nowhere.

We need to be honest with ourselves and each other by accepting that we are all partly to blame for the fact that our cities are in disarray. The streets of our cities are not properly or regularly cleaned; the buildings of our cities are not regularly checked for quality or safety controls; the zoning laws of our cities are not always enforced or followed, thus giving license to construction projects without reference to standards or a vision of what we want our cities to look like a generation from now; the city rates themselves are not diligently collected or paid, even though the money is desperately needed; and even the trash of our cities is not properly disposed of, which is both a health hazard and an eye sore.

We cannot blame city authorities or street vendors alone for this mess. We all bear some responsibility for it because although we all use and need our cities in one way or another, we are not all pulling together in the same direction to create for our country the kind of cities that can be said to be modern, or organized, or beautiful. For this reason, over the next six months, I will host three strategic conferences with the Councilors of our three cities, beginning with the 27 Councilors of Lilongwe City. Under my presidency, the city authorities will receive the support they need to serve Malawi's citizens with excellence and turn our cities into flourishing havens of peace and prosperity, even for vendors.

I thank you for listening. God bless you and God bless Malawi.