



## PRESS STATEMENT

### CONSTRUCTION OF THE MAHATMA GANDHI STATUE AT GINNERY CORNER, BLANTYRE

It has been brought to the attention of the Government of the Republic of Malawi of a petition by a section of the Malawian community, through social media, against the ongoing construction of the Mahatma Gandhi Statue at the Queen Elizabeth II Central Hospital Roundabout at Ginnery Corner alongside the Mahatma Gandhi Avenue.

This negative stance against the Mahatma Gandhi Statue has come as a great surprise to the Government of Malawi because there has not been a query against naming of the avenue after Mahatma Gandhi since this was done many years back.

In order to put everything into perspective, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation wishes to inform the general public that the Government of the Republic of Malawi enjoys mutually beneficial cooperation and partnership with the Government of the Republic of India since the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries when Malawi attained its independence in 1964.

In addition, the relations between Malawi and India have not been detached but further strengthened through establishment of residential diplomatic missions in New Delhi and Lilongwe, respectively. The Government of Malawi continues to benefit from grant assistance, scholarships and technical assistance in the areas of agriculture, trade, health, mining, and local government.

Furthermore, the Government of Malawi continues to benefit from lines of credit and concessionary loans for various development projects, the recent ones being the construction of Likhubula-Blantyre Water Project, sugar processing plant in Salima, fuel storage reservoirs in Lilongwe and Mzuzu, and purchase of agricultural equipment. The two countries are also enjoying good trade relations.

Against this backdrop, it is important to understand that the construction of the Mahatma Gandhi Statue is aimed at recognizing the outstanding role that Mahatma Gandhi played in the struggle against colonialism in Africa and India. It should be recognized that Mahatma Gandhi promoted values of simplicity, fight against social evils, promoting human and civil rights as well as uplifting of social wellbeing of people. It is also worth noting that all African freedom fighters that fought against colonialism and oppression and thus demanded independence were influenced by what

Mahatma Gandhi fought for. In other ways, Mahatma Gandhi is a role model of a human rights campaigner for both Africa and India.

It is important for Malawians to note that the Government of India will soon be constructing Mahatma Gandhi Convention/Conference Centre opposite the Golden Peacock Five Star Hotel and International Convention Centre at Chichiri, Blantyre, with a grant financing of USD10million without pre-conditions. Similarly, it should be noted that the acceptance for the ongoing construction of Mahatma Gandhi Statue was granted without pre-conditions. In addition, the Government of the Republic of Malawi is not spending any money on the construction of the Statue. With the same purpose of promoting values of Mahatma Gandhi, the Government of India will be constructing Mahatma Gandhi Convention Centres in eight (8) other African countries. All this is happening at a time when India will soon be celebrating 150 years of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi.

As such, the Government of Malawi supports the ongoing construction of the Mahatma Gandhi Statue and the Mahatma Gandhi Convention Centre. A fully functioning Mahatma Gandhi Convention Centre in Blantyre will provide an opportunity for the Government of Malawi to create jobs and generate revenues for the much needed socio-economic development of this country.

Above all, the Government of Malawi remains committed to enhancing and consolidating its diplomatic relations with the Government of India for the mutual benefit of the two countries and its peoples.

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