**WELCOME REMARKS**

**BY**

**PROF. JOHN KALENGA SAKA**

**THE BOARD CHAIRPERSON,**

**MALAWI NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS BOARD,**

**AT THE 11TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICA ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT (SAAEA) 2017**

**ON**

**MONDAY**

**17TH JULY, 2017**

* **The Minister of Education, Science & Technology, Honourable Dr. Emmanuel Fabiano, M.P.;**
* **The Secretary for Education, Science and Technology, Dr. Ken Ndala;**
* **Dr. Michael Chilala, Chairperson of SAAEA and Director of Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ);**
* **The Chairperson of Malawi Parliamentary Committee on Education, Science and Technology, Hon Dr. Elias Chakwera, M. P. and fellow committee members;**
* **The Chief Executive Officer of Malawi National Examinations Board, and your staff;**
* **The Chief Executive Officer of our hosting partner of this conference, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Malawi (ICAM) and your staff;**
* **Chief Executive Officers of SAAEA member institutions and your delegations;**
* **Chief Executive Officers and Directors of Education Institutions in Malawi;**
* **The District Commissioner for Mangochi;**
* **The District Education Manager for Mangochi;**
* **The Chairperson of the Local Organizing Committee of this conference and committee members;**
* **Distinguished delegates;**
* **Members of the Press;**
* **Ladies and gentlemen;**

**Good Morning**!

First of all, allow me Hounarable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen to join the Acting Executive Director of MANEB in welcoming the Honourable Minister of Education, Science & Technology to this important conference.

Hounarable Minister, Sir, we do not take your presence for granted because out of your busy schedule you set aside this time to grace the conference. Your presence further underscores the commitment of the Malawi Government in supporting the activities of MANEB in particular and SAAEA as a whole.

Honourable Minister, accept our sincere gratitude for your presence here. We do not take it for granted. We know you have tight schedule and therefore could have chosen to do other equally important matters of the state. However, your coming underscores your personal commitment and that of government in matters to do with educational assessment.

We would not have a better person to officially open the conference other than yourself because of your impeccable background as an accomplished scholar, an educational manager, administrator and moreso, as a former Board Chairperson of MANEB.

I would also like to recognise the presence of the Chief Executive Officers from Sister examining and assessment bodies both from within Malawi and in the Africa sub-region. Equally, I am glad to see the representation from examining bodies from Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya.

**Honourable Minister, Mr. Chairperson, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen**,

As a policy body, the Board of Directors of MANEB greatly appreciates the networking and sharing of ideas between and among examining and assessment bodies in the sub-region and beyond because such networks are obvious platforms for addressing challenges besieging the examination and assessment systems.

For instance, the current Board of Directors of MANEB identified the following challenges as major constraints in making MANEB a competitive and internationally recognized examining board:

* Increased cases of moral decay in students’ behaviour;
* Technology advancement in terms of mobile phones and internet; and
* Liberalisation of the provision of education services.

As a manifestation of moral decay, students consider examination malpractices as part of the success story and a sure way of obtaining good grades. This thinking has been exacerbated through the use of ICT. Once an examination item has leaked at one point, in no time the leakage spreads to the rest of the country through usage of mobile phones. The spirit to out-compete each other using these orthodox way is not limited to a student level. With the mushrooming of some private schooling institutions, examination malpractices have become the easier means by which some institutions outcompete each other.

**Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

These listed challenges have made the operating environment to be more elastic and prone to many challenges including examination malpractices. Simultaneously, resources are less adequate while curricula at primary and secondary school levels have undergone major reforms.

Consequently, MANEB had to undertake reforms in order for the Board to remain relevant and competitive. The reforms include: abolition of the Junior Certificate of Education (JCE) examinations, development of capacity for in-house printing of examination and development of capacity in ICT for e-registration of candidates and e-payment of the examination fees. The last two reforms are on-going. The reforms are meant to achieve three strategic goals, namely:

* well managed national examinations and assessment systems
* enhancement generation and utilisation of resources, and
* improved corporate governance.

**Honourable Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen**,

Sharing of knowledge and ideas through the SAAEA Annual Conference complements efforts that the reforms are making because conferences of this nature help examining and assessment bodies to consolidate good practices in assessment and strides to accommodate emerging principles, strategies, procedures and policies. All these will help to create a common ground for harmonising qualifications in the sub-region. Harmonisation of qualifications will go a long way to facilitate certificate equivalence practices and easing mobility of students from one education system to the other at both country and inter-country levels. And this is the spirit in the efforts to create the SADC qualifications framework.

**Honourable Minister, Mr. Chairperson, Ladies and** **Gentlemen**,

This is not my show. My humble duty was to warm the podium. Allow me therefore to conclude once again by thanking the Honourabe Minister and all delegates to the conference for your coming and gracing the conference. I would like to thank the Acting Executive Director of MANEB and members of the organizing committee for ably organising this conference.

I thank you all for your attention.