



Parliament of Malawi

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“RESHAPING MALAWI’S COMMITMENT IN PROMOTING BIOLOGICAL SECURITY”

BY

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Outline

The presentation will cover

1. Overview
2. Threats of New Waves of Pandemics
3. Status of Malawi's Commitment
4. Window of Opportunities
5. Challenges in Epidemic Preparedness
6. Role of Members of Parliament
7. Conclusion / way Forward



Overview

Malawi had confirmed cases of COVID-19 on April 2, 2020. As of 1st May 2022, there are 85,788 confirmed cases and 2,634 deaths

▶ -

Schools and Universities were closed for five months from March 2020, as a precaution against virus transmission in the country.

After eight confirmed cases of COVID-19, the Minister of Health announced a 21-day nationwide lockdown. All non-essential businesses were closed. .

Currently, the Government of Malawi and development partners are working hand in hand to ensure preventive actions in all communities.



Overview. Continued

On 17th February 2022, Malawi had a confirmed case of Type 1 wild poliovirus (WPV1).

Polio virus causes irreversible paralysis mainly in children between zero to fifteen years of age.

It also has the potential to infect immunocompromised adults. This is the first detection of a case of WPV1 in Africa since 2016.

Vaccines are the most effective and available prevention strategy for this disease, in addition to improved water and sanitation practices.

Therefore Malawi is carrying out a campaign to vaccinate all under five children in the country targeting 2.9 million children.



Threats of New Wave of Pandemics

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Although countries are fighting diseases, such as Covid 19 and polio, there is fear that the world would continue facing a possible resurgence of similar pandemics created from laboratories. It is therefore, crucial to address the possibility of weaponization of such diseases now.

It is very clear from what we have learnt from these two diseases that Malawi and even some other countries do not have the capacity to deal with any new resurgences.

Therefore, this conference is timely and critical in bringing together Parliamentarians to share best practices in combating such diseases.



Threats..... continued

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What Malawi believes as a country is that Bioterrorism which can be achieved by releasing biological agents such as bacteria, viruses and toxin in peoples to reduce their population by causing illness which lead to death cannot be underestimated.

The worst part is that, if it happens, it can disrupt the economic, religious, social distraction, ideological and political influence of many countries in the world – the way Covid 19 did.

In fact, these infectious agents have massive devastating effects on human life as compare to war. To that effect Malawi as a country believes that Bioterrorism still remains a major problem and threat to human life that needs attention.



Status of Malawi's Commitment

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Having highlighted the threats and dangers of emerging biological epidemics above, Malawi as a country has made the following commitments so far;

- ▶ - Firstly, Malawi ratified the Biological and toxic weapons conventions in 2013 which was however signed in 1972.
- ▶ - Secondly, Malawi is a state party to the Rome Statute. In fact, PGA has worked with Parliamentarians from Malawi to promote the fight against impunity for the most serious crimes, and is currently promoting the domestic implementation of the Rome Statute and the ratification of the Kampala Amendments of 2010.
- ▶ - Thirdly, Malawi signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on 3rd March 1999, and ratified the Statute on 19th September 2002 – making them the 81st State Party.



Status of Malawi's Commitment.cont

- However, though a delegation representing Malawi attended the 2010 Review Conference and joined the consensus to adopt the Kampala Amendments, Malawi is yet to ratify the Amendments. In this regard, PGA is also assisting Malawi to achieve this goal and we recommend the organization for that.
- Malawi is a party to and fully implements all the requirements of the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC).
- Malawi has also set up a Technical Committee to adopt national rules and regulations to ensure compliance with its commitments under the key multilateral non-proliferation treaties.
- Malawi is also committed to multilateral cooperation within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, in order to achieve common objectives in the area of non-proliferation and to promote international co-operation for peaceful purposes.



Window of Opportunities

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- ▶ As most countries were taken unaware by the pandemic, this has given them an opportunity to establish some readiness mechanism if at all similar occurrences would come. For example;
- ▶ Malawi has finalized its National Action Plan to improve preparedness of epidemics such as Covid-19.
- ▶ In relation to immunization in Malawi, as of 7th May 2022 1,120,521 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine had been administered and an estimated 4.4% of the total population has been fully vaccinated.
- ▶ More importantly, efforts are being made to increase vaccine uptake to reach a wider proportion of the population.



Challenges in Preparedness of Pandemics

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- ▶ Most countries including Malawi have partially and some have not yet established monitoring system of the emergency of pandemics. Some of the yet to be developed systems that need technical support and Know-how from PGA and other partners include;
 - ▶ 1. Developing monitoring systems that can spot unusual health reports from local clinics.
 - ▶ 2. Training disease detectives who can rapidly be deployed when a new health threat is reported.
 - ▶ 3. Establishment of emergency operations centers or a robust laboratory that can quickly diagnose infectious diseases.



Role of Parliamentarians/ Parliaments in advancing PGA agenda in promoting Biological Security.

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- Parliamentarians monitor Government policies at the national level. As decision-makers of policies, governmental plans and budgets, parliamentarians are the main players in deciding on legislations deriving from decisions that are made from the conferences of the Parties to various Convention aimed at promoting Biological Security laws and policies.
- By creating, amending and ratifying laws, Members of Parliament can therefore translate the agreements reached at international level into practical actions that can be implemented at national levels.
- Parliamentarians can also strengthen the mandate of PGA in our efforts to promote the implementation of the Biological Weapon Convention decisions and activities in its member states.



Conclusion/ Way Forward

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-There have been lots of misinformation on causes and effects of pandemics such as Covid-19 and others. With sharing among countries on best practices, there is need to clarify misinformation among masses. For example in Malawi when first doses of Covid-19 were introduced, very few people showed willingness to be vaccinated. It required lots of awareness campaigns for the situation to improve.

-There is need for parliamentarians to help in legislating laws and regulations that would control these myths

-Lastly, through the coordination efforts by PGA, there should be yearly presentation of states' readiness for yet to emerge pandemics. Countries that have not yet developed one, should be assisted to have a detailed Biological Security Strategy with clear commitments, time lines and responsible officers and means of resource allocation for the same.



Thank you for your
attention

Zikomo kwambiri

Asante sana

