

SPEECH FOR DR. CHIKA CHARLES ANIEKWE

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Occasion: Transforming Civil Registration in Malawi – Handover of Printers for Decentralized Civil Registration **Venue:** Ministry of Homeland Security Conference Room **Date:** 9 October 2026

- Honourable Peter Mukhito, Minister of Homeland Security;
- Honourable Madalitso Chidumu Baloyi, M.P., Minister of Health and Sanitation;
- Mrs. Linda Pacharo Moyo, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Homeland Security;
- Mr. Patrick Machika, Principal Secretary for the National Registration Bureau;
- Distinguished Representatives of the European Union, Ireland and the Royal Norwegian Embassy;
- Senior Government Officials, Development Partners and UNDP Colleagues;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning.

It is a pleasure to join you today as we mark another important milestone in Malawi's journey towards universal legal identity, inclusive public services and digital transformation.

Today's handover represents more than an investment in equipment. It reflects a fundamental shift in public service delivery — bringing civil registration closer to citizens, connecting institutions and ensuring that every Malawian is recognized throughout their lifetime.

Legal identity is the foundation for accessing education, healthcare, social protection and economic opportunities. Registering a child at birth is not merely issuing a certificate; it is establishing the foundation for lifelong inclusion.

Building an integrated national identity system

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Guests,

Malawi has made remarkable progress towards universal adult identity registration. The next priority is ensuring that every birth, marriage and death is registered accurately, efficiently and closer to citizens.

Our ambition is not simply to digitize existing processes, but to redesign public services around citizens' needs.

With UNDP's technical support, Government has developed the integrated Nzika registration application, connecting civil registration and national identity management.

In participating health facilities, children can now be registered at birth and issued certificates containing unique National Identity Numbers, establishing a lifelong identity reference.

The system also links children to their parents' identity records, strengthening population data and enabling better household-level planning and social protection targeting, with appropriate safeguards.

Expanding access through decentralization

Honourable Ministers,

The equipment being handed over today will expand birth and death registration services to an additional 52 health facilities, building on the initial deployment across 60 facilities.

The integrated Nzika application has also been piloted across 87 locations in five districts, with the ambition to expand to 250 locations by 2028.

This will reduce costs for families while improving population statistics, health planning and public service delivery.

Success will ultimately be measured not by the number of printers installed, but by the number of citizens who can access essential services more easily, affordably and with dignity.

Sustainability and wider development impact

Distinguished Guests,

Malawi's national identity system has already demonstrated significant economic and governance benefits through improved verification, stronger controls and savings in public programmes.

Digital public infrastructure is therefore a strategic national asset that strengthens accountability, service delivery and the efficient use of public resources.

UNDP is supporting NRB in operationalizing its Identity Verification and Authentication Unit, enabling secure identity verification across public and private institutions while creating opportunities for sustainable revenue generation.

The Nzika Digital ID Wallet further strengthens this ecosystem by allowing citizens to securely access and share verified identity information.

Complementing these investments, UNDP is supporting a government-wide AI-enabled intelligence platform, using sovereign, in-country computing infrastructure to strengthen analytics and evidence-based decision-making.

Digital identity establishes trust. Interoperable systems connect services. Responsible AI enables Government to make better decisions.

Together, these investments will support more efficient and citizen-centred governance, underpinned by strong data protection and national ownership.

Completing the identity lifecycle

Honourable Ministers,

Our ambition extends beyond birth registration to a complete national identity lifecycle.

Strengthening death registration, linking vital events to the national identity register and expanding marriage registration will improve population data and public service integrity.

With UNDP's technical support, NRB is preparing for the broader rollout of marriage registration services.

Our shared vision is one trusted identity throughout life, with every vital event recorded and essential services accessible to all.

Partnership and conclusion

Distinguished Guests,

I commend the leadership of the Ministry of Homeland Security and the National Registration Bureau, and the collaboration of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation in bringing registration services closer to communities.

I also sincerely thank the European Union, Ireland and the Government of Norway for their continued support through the Inclusive Digital Transformation for Malawi programme.

Your partnership is helping build not merely digital systems, but enduring national capabilities and stronger institutions.

Today, we are handing over printers. But what we are collectively building is far more significant: a trusted national identity infrastructure that recognizes every person, connects essential services and strengthens Government's capacity to serve its people.

UNDP remains committed to ensuring that these investments are nationally owned, sustainable and deliver measurable improvements in citizens' lives.

Together, we can build a Malawi where every identity is recognized, every life event is recorded and no one is left behind.

I thank you.

God bless the Republic of Malawi.