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# *The Lilongwe Civic Space Pact, 2024*

Whereas, the Malawi Government, Civil Society, and the United Nations in Malawi, **recognize the essential role of civic space in sustaining Malawi's constitutional democracy;**

Whereas, the **protection and promotion of civic space** are indispensable for ensuring the full participation of the judiciary, executive, parliament, civil society, media, business, and the legal profession in Malawi's democratic processes;

Whereas, the Malawi Judiciary, Youth and Society (YAS), and the African Judges and Jurists Forum, **convened the Malawi Civic Space Dialogue** on 23 and 24 August 2024 at the Bingu International Convention Centre (BICC) in Lilongwe, bringing together key stakeholders to confront pressing challenges and adopt actionable strategies for defending and advancing civic space in Malawi;

**Now, therefore, it is firmly resolved and committed** that the following resolutions, known as "**The Lilongwe Civic Space Pact,**" are adopted by all stakeholders:

## **1. Regular Sectoral Dialogues**

Stakeholders **commit to holding regular, structured dialogues** that address sector-specific challenges affecting civic space. These dialogues shall be aligned with the constitutional mandates of the Judiciary, Executive, Parliament, Media, Legal Profession, and Civil Society to **develop robust and sustainable solutions** for safeguarding civic space.

## **2. Multi-Stakeholder Evaluations**

All stakeholders **commit to conducting regular, multi-stakeholder evaluations** to monitor the state of civic space, **anticipate emerging challenges, and implement corrective actions** for maintaining an inclusive and vibrant civic environment.

## **3. Awareness and Education on Civic Space Rights**

We **pledge to intensify public awareness and education campaigns** to promote civic space rights, human rights, and responsibilities. This effort shall include targeted messaging to **combat disinformation, misinformation, and foster ethical digital practices.**

## **4. Research and Advocacy**

Stakeholders **resolve to conduct ongoing research and advocacy, including legislative audits and alignment with international standards.** Priority shall be given to addressing challenges posed by new technologies, including artificial intelligence that may impact civic space.

## **5. Protection of Institutional Independence**

We **commit to safeguarding the independence of institutions** entrusted with promoting and protecting civic space. Any threats to their autonomy shall be **immediately confronted, and appropriate measures shall be deployed.**

## **6. Improved Funding for Critical Governance Institutions**

We **resolve to engage Parliament and the Executive to secure sustainable funding** for essential governance institutions such as the Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC), the Judiciary, Office of the Ombudsman, Anti-Corruption Bureau and other relevant bodies to ensure they perform their mandates effectively and without compromise.

## **7. Independence of Civil Society and Media**

The independence of civil society organizations and media outlets **shall be protected without exception**. Stakeholders shall promote adherence to ethical standards while ensuring **freedom from undue influence and interference**.

## **8. Transparency in Law and Policy-Making**

We **pledge to ensure full transparency and active public participation** in law and policy-making processes, especially on matters affecting civic space, to **uphold the aspirations and expectations of all Malawians**.

## **9. Monitoring and Reporting of Power Abuses**

All stakeholders **commit to maintaining vigilance and reporting any abuse of power**, particularly concerning the enforcement of cyber laws and regulations that could restrict the freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression.

## **10. Alternative Avenues for Civic Space Protection**

We **commit to identifying and promoting alternative methods** to safeguard civic space beyond judicial interventions, including community-based initiatives, international collaborations, and non-governmental efforts.

## **11. Access to Justice for Vulnerable Groups**

We **resolve to prioritize access to justice for marginalized and vulnerable groups**, ensuring that all Malawians, regardless of their status, can fully exercise their rights within an open and inclusive civic space.

## **12. Establishment of a Multi-Stakeholder Working Group on Civic Space**

We **commit to establishing and operationalizing a dedicated Multi-Stakeholder Civic Space Protection Working Group** to safeguard civic space during elections, ensuring the **protection of democratic participation and accountability** throughout the electoral process.

*The Lilongwe Civic Space Pact* affirms the unwavering commitment of all stakeholders to **collaborate in defending and enhancing civic space**. This Pact shall serve as a **collective** roadmap and tool towards preserving the democratic values that uphold Malawi's constitutional democracy. **Continuous engagement, transparency, and proactive actions** shall be paramount in achieving these shared objectives.

**Signed this day, December 16, 2024 at Lilongwe, Malawi, by:**

**Hon. Rizine Mzikamanda, SC  
Chief Justice of the Republic of Malawi**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rt Hon. Catherine Gotani Hara  
The Speaker of Malawi National Assembly**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hon. Titus Songiso Mvalo  
Minister of Justice, Republic of Malawi**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ms. Chikondi Chijozi  
Chairperson, Malawi Human Rights Commission**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ms. Innocentia Ottober  
Chairperson, NGO Authority**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mr. Benedicto Kondowe  
Chairperson, National Advocacy Platform (NAP)  
On behalf of CSOs and NGOs**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed in the presence of:**

**Her Excellency, Ms. Rebecca Adda-Dontoh  
United Nations Resident Coordinator to Malawi**

**Mr. Martin Okumu-Masiga  
Secretary General  
Africa Judges and Jurists Forum (AJJF)**