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## PRESS RELEASE

### **UN AND GoM SIGN A POVERTY – ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE (PEI) PROJECT**

**Lilongwe, 26 February, 2014** – As Malawi looks forward to achieving its MDG targets on environmental sustainability by 2015, the Government together with UNDP and UNEP have agreed to scale up the Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) – a programme aimed at fighting poverty, and stimulating security by promoting the sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystems that poor people rely on for their livelihoods.

The tripartite agreement which involved signing of the PEI programme document was made at the Ministry of Finance (MOF) in Lilongwe by the Secretary to the Treasury, Mr. Newby Kumwembe and UNDP Resident Representative a.i., Ms Carol Flore-Smreczniak. George Bouma, Co-Director of PEI signed the document after the event on 3rd March, 2014. Secretaries for Economic Planning and Development; and Climate Change and Environment Management, Mr Ted Sitimawina and Dr. Yanira Ntupanyama respectively as lead implementing partners, were also in attendance.

PEI Malawi is part of a global programme designed to address environmental challenges and opportunities in the face of poverty in various countries. It does this by supporting the integration and harmonisation of sustainable natural resource management in policy, planning and budgetary processes at national, sector and district levels. It also seeks to demonstrate to key decision-makers, as well as donors, that further investment in environmentally sustainable natural resource management is justified in order to assist the country to attain priority development objectives.

The Secretary to the Treasury, Mr Newby Kumwembe acknowledged that “the Government of Malawi is aware that environmental degradation in Malawi is a problem with serious economic implications. No meaningful reduction in poverty can be achieved in the country without addressing environmental degradation.”

The project which will primarily be implemented by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPD) is aimed at supporting the Government of Malawi to catalyse change through increased government and donor budget allocations for pro-poor sustainable environment and natural resource management.

“The PEI project will enhance operationalization of poverty-environment (P-E) linkages at the sector and district level. This will be done by providing specific P-E evidence and guidelines based on disaggregated data and analysis. This is quite critical in contributing to the achievement of our national development objectives and goals,” said Mr Ted Sitimawina, Secretary to MEPD.

In her remarks, Ms Carol Flore-Smreczniak, who also delivered a speech on behalf of Mr David Smith, PEI Africa Manager, noted the substantial achievements that the Government and the people of Malawi, UNEP and UNDP, have reached together in the first phase of PEI Malawi project; and the need to meet the implementation challenges.

“We are here to demonstrate our continued commitment for poverty-environment mainstreaming as a means to support pro-poor sustainable development in Malawi as well as our commitment for joint programming between UNEP and UNDP and between the Ministry of Economic Development Planning (MEPD) and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Management. PEI is a model of breaking down the silos between ‘poverty’ and ‘environment’, between UNEP and UNDP and between the Ministries responsible for Planning and Environment,” said Ms Flore-Smreczniak.

The initial phase of the project has been a success. The project has successfully contributed to, among other things, ensuring the inclusion of sustainability indicators in the monitoring and evaluation framework for the ‘Agricultural Sector Wide Approach’ (ASWAp) coordinated jointly with the World Bank Malawi, which resulted in the updating of baseline information for soil loss indicators and nutrient use efficiency. This information has been used for both the MGDS II and the ASWAp.

Most importantly, the project supported the development of guidelines for mainstreaming environment and climate change in the national budget. These guidelines have been used for the formulation of the 2013/14 and 2014/15 budget. The guidelines make it imperative that budget submissions appropriately reflect environment and climate change priorities in accordance with the environment and climate change mainstreaming guidelines, in specific areas, including environmental impact assessments and monitoring.

The second phase of the programme is a four-year initiative that will run from 2014 to 2017 with a total budget of about USD 3.2 million supported by UNDP, UNEP and potentially other sources. The key proposed solution is to support the government of Malawi to catalyse change through increased government and donor budget allocations for pro-poor sustainable environment and natural resource management.

By integrating with the broader UNDP support; building sufficient institutional capacity; ensuring continued budgeting and financing; and enhanced awareness in the civil society, the media and the private sector, it is hoped that the development outcomes and initiatives will be sustained well after the end of the project in 2017.

**For more information please contact the following:**

**Ms Shorai Nyambalo-Ng’ambi, UNDP Communications Officer at [christina-shorai.nyambalo@undp.org](mailto:christina-shorai.nyambalo@undp.org) or 01774081**

**Mr Nations Msowoya, MoF Public Relations Officer at [nmsowoya@finance.gov.mw](mailto:nmsowoya@finance.gov.mw) or 01789335/55**

**Mr Jollam Banda MEPD at [jolambanda@yahoo.com](mailto:jolambanda@yahoo.com) or 01788888**