

Developing National and Local Capacities for Sustaining Social Cohesion, Peace, and Development in Malawi:

2014 strategy and Priorities

I. Context: Malawi's shorter-term prospects

1. Malawi faces a number of complex challenges to its longer-term stability and sustainable development. The impact of global climate change, agricultural practices and of international economic pressures has created volatility and periods of food insecurity. Economic growth has lagged behind other countries in the region, although improvements have been made in ensuring the reliable availability of agricultural inputs, and hence the productivity of the agricultural sector as a whole.

2. The country's leadership has had a mixed record of developing the necessary coalitions and consensus to deliver meaningful reform, and the policies that would address the current economic challenges. The past five years have seen greatly heightened political tensions and bickering, and politics has tended to coalesce around personalities rather than issues. The period between 2010 and 2012 also saw an increase in heavy controls over the media and public expression. At the same time, economic turbulence led to demonstrations led by civic organizations. The two tendencies collided in July 2011, leading to a heavy crackdown and the deaths of 20 protestors. Despite its turbulent politics, Malawi had tended to be a peaceful country, and this episode created sufficient collective shock to lead to an invitation for UN facilitation for a dialogue between the government and civil society representatives.

3. A number of measures to increase freedom of expression and accountability were agreed to as a result of these talks. The subsequent death of President Mutharika due to natural causes and the accession of his vice-president coincided with an increased hope for the implementation of these measures, and

for better political and economic governance. However, recurring cycles of political rancor and revelations of massive financial mismanagement in September 2013 had put many of these hopes into abeyance by end-2013; and portended possibilities of elections-related violence around the May, 2014 national polls, clean and peaceful exercises in the past notwithstanding.

4. With the ruling party mired in corruption scandals, and accusations being levied against a range of public officials and political leaders, the cause of clean governance and anti-corruption measures had also fallen prey to personal wrangling and pre-election manipulation, thus raising fears of another explosion of civic dissent. Partisans of major political parties have already traded blows on a number of occasions in the streets, as well as accusations of plans to tamper with the vote, and the general consensus among observers and the intelligentsia appears to be that the election period could see heightened political tension, especially the period immediate after elections. While the elections themselves are forecast as likely to be peaceful, the potential for potentially violent tensions is seen as being high in the immediate aftermath of the polls. While manipulation of identity had not been an issue in Malawi in the past, political leaders have shown a recent increase in their propensity to manipulate for partisan gain, as well as to mobilize unemployed youth in this regard.

II. Near-to-mid-term scenarios

5. While the scale of violence is unlikely to be high in the next elections, political desperation and popular frustration may also create a perfect storm of tension, exploding simultaneously with the polls. Even if the polls occur peacefully, the post-election scenario is therefore likely to be characterized by perennial deadlock should no party win a clear majority, and a likely return to creeping authoritarianism if one of them does so.

6. In either scenario, popular discontent is likely to continue to spill into the streets, raising prospects for future violence well after elections. This is especially

likely given that Malawi's political culture has veered between authoritarian governance and dysfunctional pluralism, while interpersonal feuding and deadlock has permeated most politics.

7. Any post-election government will also have to contend with state machinery running low on morale and weakened by successive scandals, and still in need of significant upgrading and reform. However, political will for such reform may be even more difficult to summon in the aftermath of elections. Inclusive politics, constructive negotiation, and a tendency towards consensus will all be crucial, but all are already difficult to come by in Malawi.

III. Current capacities to deal with these challenges

8. Political dysfunction notwithstanding, an active civic culture, accompanied by moments of collective political lucidity, has also provided hope. Of particular importance has been the role of religious leaders, who wield strong influence in a traditional society.

9. For almost two decades now, since 1992, the major religious denominations and associations in Malawi (both Christian and Muslim) have organized themselves into the Public Affairs Committee (PAC), which has attempted to facilitate dialogue between government and civil society, mediate between feuding political parties, and advocate for peace and against violence, as well as on issues of wider national interest. PAC's membership consists of so-called "mother bodies," or religious institutions which represent their respective congregations. The secretary-generals of these institutions represent these bodies in PAC. The latter is therefore able to leverage the on-ground networks of its members. Admirable as the PAC's efforts have been, however, the country has remained in a situation of "negative peace," wherein there isn't large scale violence, but development does not move forward either.

10. Several constraints have hindered PAC's work:

- i. They have not yet been able to clearly differentiate between their facilitation, mediation and advocacy roles, and to ensure that sufficient capacities are available to strongly fulfill each role.
- ii. While the PAC membership includes all major denominations, the actual numbers of individuals involved in mediating and sustaining a viable consensus, or in resolving conflicts recurring on an almost daily basis, has not yet reached a critical mass; overall the numbers of actors involved in these efforts also remains low.
- iii. While religious and traditional leaders, especially at the national level, have the occasional convening power to summon heads of government and political parties, they are currently less able to mentor and “accompany” leaders in acquiring and applying new methods, skills and behaviors conducive to collaboration and inclusive governance; Malawian leaders have yet to answer the perennial question of politics: How does one compete on behalf of one’s constituency, and collaborate in the national interest, at the same time?
- iv. In a largely conservative society with bouts of authoritarianism, the youth, media, and women—normally the fuel that drives change—have remained quiescent, at least on issues related to peace and collaboration. Popular outbursts of anger are rarely sustained over the longer term in the form of roles that involve mediation, the early prevention of violence, and systematic advocacy for good governance that makes allies out of progressive officials rather engaging with them in confrontation alone.
- v. The attributes of these various actors have also not yet coalesced into a national “peace architecture,” or a system of mutually reinforcing institutions and forums where capacities for mediation and violence prevention are developed, sustained, and applied to recurring crises over a period of time. These capacities can also be used to facilitate consensus on

contested national priorities; relieve the frequent deadlock that characterize governance and decision-making in Malawi; and involve the public more actively in the development of policies and programmes.

IV. A Theory of Change

11. A systemic transformation of Malawi's political culture will require the efforts of multiple actors and is a generational project. However, catalytic initiatives in the short-to-medium-term should help create and sustain sufficient momentum such that this transformation is precipitated. These initiatives should center on developing, applying and sustaining, at both the national and local levels, credible and autonomous capacities for early warning and response and for mediation and facilitation, such that consensus is built and disputes resolved in a timely and effective manner. They should also help build the collaborative capacity of leaders at all levels.

12. This transformation will also be greatly accelerated by providing access and imparting dispute resolution and collaborative leadership skills to women, youth, and other key stakeholders whose roles are essential for addressing the underlying causes of poverty and social exclusion, and to harness the full potential of Malawian society toward economic, social and political progress. In addition to groups like PAC, the energies of communities, particularly youth and women, relevant public institutions, and civil society groups have to be channeled towards 'peace oriented and peace-promoting activities' to help address and mitigate existing and potential tensions.

13. The initial results of these initiatives should not be measured in terms of a comprehensive improvement in Malawian governance, but a change in the nature of political discourse, and an increased propensity towards the peaceful settlement of disputes, and towards resolving deadlocks through constructive negotiation.

14. To the extent that a number of relevant initial steps have already been taken by UNDP, the organization is well-placed to provide this support:
- a. UNDP provided the technical and logistical basis for the UN facilitation in 2011.
 - b. UNDP has provided technical assistance for successive national elections; ensuring that they are free and fair has reduced chances of violence due to allegations of fraud or vote-rigging.
 - c. For nearly a decade, UNDP has provided modest support for capacity development for the PAC; it has now leveraged this into an agreement, following a UNDP-supported assessment and strategy development exercise by the PAC leadership in early February 2014, for more systematic assistance for each of PAC's possible roles: (a) a trusted intermediary between senior leaders; (ii) an "insider mediator," as opposed to an external intervention by the UN, for instance; (iii) and an advocate of peace and development.
 - d. Following a series of consultations in 2013, and an initial assessment report by an international expert (who facilitated these consultations) which identified the essential steps for the way forward, UNDP has also agreed with the Office of the President and the Cabinet to support the development of national peace architecture, taking cognizance of existing capacities and institutions.
 - e. Consultations have also been held with youth and women' groups to better channel their energy into more effective advocacy, and form the core of an early-warning-and-response system at the local level.
 - f. Similarly, editors and publishers of the key media organs have been approached, and have responded positively, to the idea of building their capacities for gender and conflict-sensitive reporting, and for greater professionalism in their work.

V. A Programme on Social Cohesion, Peace, and Development

Critical considerations on UNDP's programmatic support

15. Initial consultations with stakeholders, development partners, and government officials around the issue of national peace architecture in 2013 and 2014 revealed a broad consensus around this approach. However, a number of short-term challenges were highlighted which imply that significant additional work will have to be done before such an architecture can be given a firm institutional form akin to the National Peace Council in Ghana, the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission in Zimbabwe, or the National Consultative Forum in Uganda, all of which are formal, autonomous bodies with legislative or constitutional mandates.

16. Consultations and assessments have highlighted that further multi-stakeholder dialogue will be required before a robust consensus is reached on the institutional form of such an architecture, and especially with regard to the government's role in it. Malawi's recent history has highlighted a continuing gap in trust between the state and civic actors. In addition, and as recent issues with regard to financial management have highlighted, institutional capacities within the system of government remain in need of development, and development partners are reluctant to invest in new institutions until these capacities have been further refined. Finally, government officials have themselves highlighted that the 2014 elections will tax their capacities to a significant degree. While willing to launch the conversations around a national architecture in the near-term, their capacity constraints suggest that further steps will have to wait till after the new government has been elected and settled in.

17. In the short-term, PAC also plays to a certain extent the role that will be played in longer-term by such an architecture. However, PAC does not have a formal constitutional or legislative mandate, and its own role faces a number of challenges going forward.

18. From the time of its launch in 1992, PAC has mediated among political parties and national stakeholders on at least three occasions. The actual mediation has been done by individual PAC members under a formal or an informal PAC umbrella. At the same time, a large portion of PAC's work has involved advocacy on public issues, with the organization often challenging the government of the day on specific issues. This adversarial role has often been at odds with PAC's efforts to mediate, or to facilitate dialogue, a fact of which PAC's members are cognizant.

19. The balancing of these different roles, and systematically planning for and methodically accomplishing each, will require an upgrade in PAC's strategy and capacities in the short-to-medium-term. To identify the parameters of this upgrade, UNDP facilitated the PAC leadership in early February, through an intensive three-day risk assessment, scenario planning and simulation exercise, to develop an action plan that identifies clear roles for the initial period of 2014-2015, and the capacities required to play these roles. The outline action plan was adopted on the basis of consensus by the PAC plenary. PAC members requested further accompaniment and support from UNDP in implementing this action plan, especially in the period leading to elections in 2014.

20. PAC members also highlighted that a significant challenge facing Malawi at this juncture is the limited space for the youth to meaningfully participate in social, economic, development, and political processes, especially given the fact that 40% of the population is young persons between 10 and 29 years. There is a serious lack of employment opportunities for young people resulting in increasing frustration and disaffection among the youth, especially the urbanized youth, with the current system of governance. Of particular concern is the vulnerability and desperation that this situation breeds among segments of the youth demographic. Analysis from contexts where the youth have been actively involved in acts of violence points to the possibility of the recurrence of this violence on a larger scale. In the case of Malawi, there are two potential risks, namely: (i) the youth being exploited by the political class in the run up to

elections to perpetrate violence against opponents (there is growing evidence of this practice in Malawi), and (ii) youth opting on their own for violence as a means of venting their frustration and making themselves heard. PAC members highlighted the urgent necessity of the meaningful engagement of youth in processes of national dialogue and development.

21. In their analysis of risks and opportunities, PAC members pointed out that Malawi's media, especially radio, is the primary source of information for many citizens, and has the power to shape attitudes, and influence behavior in ways that have lasting impact on people. It can be a powerful resource in the building of social cohesion. Training should be provided to the media in conflict and gender sensitive journalism, and the Media Council of Malawi's capacity should be strengthened to engage media editors in peer review and monitoring of conflict insensitive content, as well as in mediating conflicts between media and aggrieved parties. Conflict-sensitive and gender-responsive guidelines should also be developed and implemented for media houses and journalists (print and electronic) to contribute to a responsible media climate prior, during, and after elections.

22. Finally, PAC members acknowledged that while women did not serve as clergy in Malawi's major denominations, they were active in faith-based organizations, and capable of playing significant roles in mobilizing other women for initiatives towards peace, as well as greater participation in governance. Building on the initial sensitization exercises conducted for women's groups in 2013, PAC members urged a significant effort in building these capacities for women's networks and organizations.

23. The outputs that will be supported by UNDP through this programme, and which are listed below, are drawn from these conversations with PAC, and with senior government officials, in 2014, as well as prior work done in 2013. UNDP's approach towards supporting these outputs will be characterized by the gentle accompaniment of key actors, a consistent emphasis on national and local ownership, and a focus on the steady absorption of capacity by counterparts

rather than one-off training. This programme elements indicated below are geared towards the immediate short-term to medium-term, but should provide the basis for longer-term UNDP assistance for a systematic and self-sustaining national peace architecture.

Programme outputs

Output 1: The Road map and the Strategic Plan for the National Peace Architecture are developed through national consultation processes (corresponding to Output 1 in the AWP)

24. The Final Draft Report for Development of a National Architecture for Peace in Malawi, prepared in 2013, states that, "the establishment of an infrastructure for peace should be viewed as "work in progress" that requires a continuing national consultation process with which every Malawian can identify." As a follow-up, and to maintain the momentum generated during the consultations leading to the final draft report, there will be extensive further consultations with political leadership at multiple levels - political party, the executive branch, and the legislature - faith-based organizations, business and other entities. The consultations would determine the nature of the structure of the National Peace Architecture, whether a Constitutional Commission or some other entity, as well it's funding and programmes. The consultations will also look at the issue of the relationship between independent institutions such as the National Human Rights Institution and the peace architecture.

25. The methodology of the consultations will include facilitated dialogues between critical stakeholders, meetings with key individual stakeholders, and public forums to ensure that the establishment of the peace architecture is not seen as serving a partisan political agenda or being dominated by one stakeholder.

26. The consultations should yield a strategic plan for the development of the national peace architecture based on a strong consensus among the participating

actors. The plan should clearly identify the resources and capacities needed for the development of the architecture, and the manner in which these will build on the current capacities, as well as the initiatives being undertaken in the short-to-medium-term, and which are detailed below.

Output 2: The Public Affairs Committee has necessary capacities, tools and strategies to implement mediation and dialogue facilitation activities.

27. The work of PAC, as supported through this programme, will consist of the following initiatives, which were discussed and agreed to in plenary during the PAC consultation in the first week of February, 2014:

(a) Local level violence prevention in the short-term through the participation of youth and women (corresponding to Output 2.2 of the AWP)

28. Under the auspices of the PAC and its secretariat, and with the support of UNDP, a network of local youth volunteers will be identified and strengthened through churches and mosques, and will be trained in the monitoring of potential risks, and in mediation. **Efforts will be made to ensure that at least one-third of the participants are women.** The volunteers will be linked with Multi-Party Liaison Committees (political party coordination committees supported by the Elections Commission); local governments; and law enforcement, and will ensure communications and information-sharing with these entities. Volunteers will also be trained to observe emerging election-related flashpoints, and to coordinate and communicate with election officials, and with PAC leadership. An existing mapping of “hotspots” will be further validated and refined, and the majority of volunteers deployed in these hotspots.

(b) Violence prevention in the medium term (corresponding to elements of Output 2.1 in AWP)

29. UNDP will work with PAC to ensure that resources are mobilized during the period of project implementation to help sustain the network in the longer term.

The longer-term institutional base for the network will be agreed on during the consultations on the national peace architecture. In addition to highlighting the short-term risks around elections, PAC members also highlighted two additional medium-term risks: possible tensions over the mining of extractives, and the emergence of a potentially volatile mix wherein political, religious, and regional polarization overlapped and converged due to its exploitation by political actors. Local-level violence prevention capacities will be essential for addressing the impact of these risks.

(c) Systematic national-level mediation (corresponding to elements of Output 2.1 in the AWP)

30. To address any potential political conflict in the aftermath of elections, as well as longer-term challenges, PAC members will identify up to ten individuals with eminence and gravitas, including from PAC membership, who would be viewed as credible intermediaries or mediators by all parties; at least three will be persons with access to highest levels of government and the opposition. **At least two will be women.**

31. This group will be assisted with the development of capacity for high-level mediation, facilitation, and dialogue support roles, including the establishment of a back-up mediation support team, and the identification of experts who can be sourced on particular issues, especially extractives. A mapping of the issues and actors on and among which the panel could play a role, including but not limited to elections, will also be conducted. Outreach will be carried out to the actors identified in order to establish the terms of reference and role of the panel.

32. During the February 2014 exercise, PAC members recognized that the same PAC members who carried out public advocacy roles on issues such as corruption and transparent governance could not serve as mediators who could be called on to play behind-the-scenes roles. In addition, and while operating under PAC auspices, mediators may also need to at times act independently and *off* camera. The constitution of a panel of mediators with a distinct identity, but linked to PAC,

should help address this lacuna. As with local-level violence prevention, the longer-term parameters for the institutionalization of the mediators' panel will be determined through consultations on the national peace architecture.

(d) Public Dialogue and Advocacy (corresponding to outputs 2.3 and 2.4 in the AWP)

33. PAC will lead at least three public consultations on issues of national concern, with a view to establishing a shared minimum national agenda, beginning with the all-inclusive conversation on transparency and accountability currently scheduled for February 2014. A working-level "liaison group" will be established, with focal points from all parties, to reach prior agreement on the basic parameters of the public consultations. **An effort will be made to ensure that at least a fourth of the participants in the consultations are women.**

34. The shared minimum national agenda is seen as providing a public reference point against which to evaluate the platforms of political parties, and eventually the performance of the government. It should also help ease the perennial deadlock that has characterized governance in Malawi, largely peaceful elections notwithstanding. **Furthermore, it should help establish the hitherto untapped potential of Malawi's youth and women in advancing peace and development in the country, and identify measures to enable their participation.**

35. PAC's work in this regard will be coordinated closely with the National Development Council, which is a body of experts appointed by the President in 2013 following recommendations from a prior all-inclusive consultation convened by PAC. The new body is charged with developing the content of a national development agenda. The distribution of labor between the PAC and Council will involve the former in the convening and facilitation of future consultations, while the latter is foreseen as developing substantive content on the issues highlighted for detailed consideration in these discussions.

36. Given the significant outreach of PAC members to their constituencies, the former will undertake the development and dissemination of common messages and prayers for peace through churches and mosques, including national prayer days for peace, using existing PAC resources. Peace marches will also be organized as feasible. This will be significant in a context where almost all public events and demonstrations have been undertaken in recent years with a confrontational or adversarial purpose.

37. While women do not serve as clergy in the major denominations in Malawi, they are active in other roles in churches and mosques. Drawing on a similar initiative developed by the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda, PAC will foster a “women in faith” network that should play critical and visible roles in advancing its various public dialogue and advocacy initiatives.

38. While the youth-centered early-warning-and-response network at the local level (para 27) should play a critical role in advancing the positive participation of those youth who may otherwise be inclined to engage in more inclement activities, PAC also envisages the convening of a youth peace forum prior to elections, where concrete measures that can be undertaken by youth to advance peace in their communities will also be identified. The forum should also help identify a longer-term plan for more comprehensive support for youth in acquiring and applying “life skills,” which should include specific skills for advancing peace in their communities.

39. It is important to mention at this point that in the short-to-medium-term, large scale assistance for youth in acquiring economic assets and sustainable livelihoods is seen as falling within the purview of those development partners who are already providing significant economic assistance to Malawi. However, UNDP may wish to assess the possibilities of its playing a role in this regard in the longer-term term, and the manner in which the resources and capacities to support this role will be acquired. Of particular value will be the sharing of experiences in generating sustainable livelihoods.

(e) Facilitation (corresponding to elements of output 2.1 in AWP)

40. PAC members will undertake pre-election interface with presidential candidates and with key actors (election commission, Supreme Court, police), towards clarifying intentions and plans for ensuring a free and peaceful poll, and also for ensuring the relevant coordination and communication.

41. In the same vein, PAC members will facilitate a public peace pledge on the part of presidential candidates, and an agreement on the monitoring of the pledge (with a sub-group from PAC conducting prior informal consultations with all parties), prior to national elections in 2014. In doing so, they will use the model of the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU), a similar body who obtained a pledge from the presidential candidates prior to the 2012 national polls in Uganda. The implementation of the pledge contributed to reducing violence as compared to the previous polls. IRCU will provide technical assistance for PAC in implementing this action.

(f) Development of PAC capacities (corresponding to output 2.5 in AWP)

42. PAC members identified a number of capacities that will need to be urgently acquired if they are to play the roles indicated above. PAC members will have to be trained on engagement with the media, taking into account the different contexts and situations in which PAC's roles will be played. PAC internal guidelines on public statements with regard to elections, and sensitive political issues, will have to be developed, and all PAC members acquainted with these guidelines. A strategy on public outreach and information-sharing, and production of materials as part of the strategy, will also have to be developed.

43. These tasks will require a further strengthening of the PAC secretariat, which currently comprises of only one Executive Director, and one support person. An additional programme officer and support person will be required to enable the implementation of the priorities detailed in this document. The constitution of a mediation support team, which could comprise of a number of

experts on retainer, for the “panel of mediators” has already been mentioned earlier (para 30).

Output 3: Media and civil society organizations have relevant capacities and skills to implement conflict prevention activities (in particular, conflict-and-gender-sensitive reporting, and participation in local early-warning-response-systems). (Corresponding to Output 3 in the AWP)

44. UNDP will work with the Media Council of Malawi to support the training and establishment of a network of reporters familiar with conflict-and-gender sensitive reporting to promote this practice among the major media outlets, and to also establish a peer-to-peer monitoring network. The network will also look at wider issues of increasing professionalism and accountability in reporting, and in drawing on best practices identified in this regard by experts groups such as the standing forum convened by the National Endowment for Democracy.

45. Initial training, and the identification of modalities for appropriate action in the period leading up to national elections and in their immediate aftermath, will be conducted through at least two exercises before mid-2014. The Media Council will also be assisted in the short term in establishing procedures for monitoring language used in the print and broadcast media, and for issuing periodic content review reports.

46. The longer-term institutionalization of these short-term modalities will be further detailed within the parameters of the conversation around the national peace architecture. However, sustained support for these capacities, and given the overall state of underdevelopment of the national media in Malawi, will also continue to be a part of UNDP’s longer-term development assistance for Malawi.

47. Linked to the activities of the women in PAC’s faith-based networks (para 37), and in partnership with the Office of the President and the Cabinet, UNDP will support targeted training for women in three pilot regions in peace-building, conflict transformation, and early-warning-and-response. The training

will be delivered through women's organizations that have already engaged with UNDP in preliminary assessments and conversations in 2013, and these organizations will bear the responsibility, in the short-term, for ensuring that women are able to play the roles for which they have been trained in a systematic manner that achieves a critical mass of impact. Where possible, efforts will be made to ensure that the women participating in the youth-based local-level violence prevention efforts undertaken under PAC auspices also benefit from this support, and conversely, women participating in these efforts are able to train and mentor others.

48. The conversations around a national peace architecture that will be unfolding simultaneously will include a specific focus on a systematic, long-term, and sustainable role for women as a crucial component of this architecture. In addition, these initiatives will be implemented in a specific partnership with the UN Country Team, UN Women and existing initiatives such as "Political Parties and the Political Empowerment of Women Project."

Output 4: Programme management and support capacities acquired and implemented (corresponding to Output 4 in the AWP)

49. From the UNDP side, programmatic leadership will continue to be provided by the Peace and Development Advisor under the detailed guidance of the UN Resident Coordinator. The PDA will be supported by at least one national officer and a programme associate.

50. Following the consultation with the PAC leadership in 2014, PAC members requested the continued engagement through 2014, i.e. in the short-term, of the facilitators and resource persons (from UNDP, the DPA Standby Mediation Team, and IRCU) who had supported the consultation, and specifically until new modalities such as the "panel of mediators" had acquired traction and sustainability, and also until such time as the period of intensified political tension had elapsed. As has been the case, this support will be provided under the close guidance of the Resident Coordinator.

51. Also, as is currently the case, regular consultations, debriefs, and feedback will be conducted and sought from UN headquarters. The modality of periodic reports by the PDA, as well as regular teleconferences with New York, will continue to be used.

52. This programme will be implemented both under the Direct Implementation (DIM) and National Implementation (NIM) modalities. Outputs 2 and 4 will be implemented using DIM, and outputs 1 and 3 will be implemented using NIM, for which the Office of the President and the Cabinet (OPC) will be the primary implementing partners. This is partly because Output 2 focuses on initiatives by PAC, and these cannot be seen—in the current political environment—as being directly supported by the OPC. However, project oversight will be undertaken by a Project Steering Committee, which will comprise representatives of the Office of President and Cabinet (OPC), the Civil Society Taskforce (an umbrella coordination body for the development of civic capacities) and other key partner and beneficiary institutions.

53. The Steering Committee will also participate in the relevant stages of project process, including project appraisal (LPAC), review and monitoring of implementation, and evaluation; build stakeholders' consensus around the project's strategies and planned results; provide advice when substantive changes are needed in the project's planned results, strategies or implementation arrangements; and monitor progress, participate in field visits to project sites, consult beneficiaries, and ensure that potential opportunities and risks, including lessons learned from experience, are taken into account by the project management. The Steering Committee will convene on a quarterly basis to review progress made and provide strategic direction as well as guidance to the project.

54. The Office of the President and the Cabinet (OPC) will host a programme officer and a programme associate who will be responsible for the day-to-day management of Outputs 1 and 3 of the project. In addition, the programme officer will serve as the Secretary to the Steering Committee. S/he will work in

close collaboration with the Peace and Development Advisor, who will provide technical assistance and substantive advice to the project. The team will work under the overall supervision of the UN Resident Coordinator and will be responsible for (i) leading this strategic initiative to strengthen national capacities for dispute resolution and collaborative problem-solving and (2) supporting activities to strengthen the capacity of the UNCT in the conflict sensitive planning and implementation of UNCT activities. The team will support and work directly with staff at the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) to build their skills and management abilities.

55. UNDP will provide technical and financial support to the project, and will be responsible for procurement of goods and services in accordance with its corporate guidelines. These emphasize transparency, competitive selection of vendors and direct accountability for use of resources. The UNDP Guidelines for National and Direct Implementation will as appropriate govern all relevant management, procurement, and recruitment processes relating to the project. The project shall also be subject to the auditing procedures as stipulated in the UNDP Financial Regulations, Rules and Directives. The audit report will be circulated to all participating partners and where corrective action is recommended, and the recommendations diligently implemented.

VI. Risk Management Strategy for the Programme

56. The current political, socio-economic environment in Malawi, as well as the impending tripartite elections adds to the volatile context in which the project will be implemented. Challenges in harnessing resources and cooperation from major stakeholders and actors are anticipated, with an increasing focus on the socio-economic turmoil and the 2014 elections. Additionally, the country's current political and financial mismanagement context may impact efforts to build partnerships that will enhance the effectiveness of the project. To mitigate the identified risks, UNDP will work with national and development partners,

leveraging resources at national, regional, and global levels, in support of the programme.

57. Specifically UNDP will use the Steering Committee as a central element in its risk management strategy. Meetings of the Committee will not just cover technical reviews of project implementation, but also provide a forum for sustaining consensus among members on the overall rationale and direction of the programme. Should political circumstances lead to significant divergence among government and civil society, for instance, the meetings could provide an opportunity to facilitate consensus, at least as far the content of the programme is concerned.

58. Sustained outreach and communication with all relevant stakeholders will also be conducted by the programme team and the Resident Coordinator, clarifying issues as they arise, and developing innovative solutions to any resource-related and operational challenges that might develop during the programme's implementation. Support from UN headquarters may be sought as necessary and appropriate.

VII. Monitoring and Evaluation

59. UNDP, in close collaboration with OPC and PAC, will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the project. OPC and PAC will be responsible for producing regular performance reports in accordance with UNDP reporting requirements. The reports will comprise of a monthly financial report, a monthly update on project issues and progress, a quarterly technical report and an annual progress and financial report, to be presented to UNDP. The reports will contain a summary of activities supported by the project, their contribution to desired outcomes/outputs; information on progress achieved, constraints encountered and action taken to address them.

60. An annual project review shall be conducted during the fourth quarter of the year of the project to assess the performance of the project and propose the

Annual Work Plan (AWP) for the following year. A mid-term review will be undertaken with a view to monitoring progress and the strategic direction of the project, as well as ensuring alignment of project outputs and outcomes with the priorities outlined in the project strategy. Within the annual cycle of the programme, its programme officer shall ensure the creation of an issues log, a risk log, lessons learnt, and a monitoring schedule plan in ATLAS to track key management actions and events.