



REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

PRESS RELEASE

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs wishes to inform the general public that the home-bound departure of the plane carrying His Excellency Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, President of the Republic of Malawi, and Her Excellency Madame Monica Chakwera, First Lady of the Republic of Malawi, was delayed by seven hours on Friday, 13th November, 2020. The plane was scheduled to leave South Africa at 15:30 Hrs, but did not leave until 22:30 Hrs.

Chief among the causes of the delay was the South African Government's refusal to allow Malawi's advance delegation to travel back home together with President Chakwera and his delegation, citing unspecified security reasons. The South African authorities' inexplicable refusal to let Malawi's President leave with his advance team came despite being informed of the arrangement in advance, in conformity to a similar arrangement made in all the countries President Chakwera has visited thus far.

Dissatisfied with the vague security reasons given for the refusal, His Excellency the President decided that he would not travel back to Malawi without his advance team. In the

impasse that followed, the Malawi delegation proposed to the South African authorities that only President Chakwera and his delegation should leave from Pretoria Waterkloof Military Airbase where their plane had landed, while the advance team should be picked up en route from OR Tambo International Airport. For no apparent reason, the South African authorities rejected this proposal as well. The Malawi delegation then spent the next 6 hours trying to reason with the South African authorities before the proposal was accepted.

In retrospect, the Malawi delegation was justified in its dissatisfaction with the unspecified security reasons cited for the refusal. To begin with, President Chakwera's plane was parked at Pretoria Waterkloof Military Airbase, a highly secure facility, under guard by the South African police throughout the visit. Secondly, at the time that Malawi's advance team was being barred from boarding the plane, their passports and luggage were thoroughly checked by uniformed police officers instead of South Africa's immigration officers. Thirdly, the entire delegation's luggage was loaded onto the flight by military personnel from the South African Defence Force. Fourthly, at the scheduled time of departure from the military airbase, there were dozens of South African security personnel on the ground, who not only inspected the plane and its cargo, but also inspected every passenger on entry.

The Malawi delegation complied with all these security measures out of deference to the vague security concerns of

the South African authorities, despite the fact that the manner in which they were conducted and the delay they caused breached diplomatic protocols commensurate with the dignity of President Chakwera's office and person. As such, the Malawi delegation was justified to dismiss as unacceptable and unsatisfactory the South African authorities' use of unspecified security reasons to hinder President Chakwera from leaving with his advance team. Even after agreeing to let the advance team board the plane at OR Tambo International Airport, the South African authorities subjected the team to additional security checks before and after boarding the plane, again without giving any specific security reasons. In fact, to date, those security reasons have not been communicated through formal channels.

The Government of Malawi is aware and grateful that a public statement was recently issued by the South African Government, exculpating President Chakwera from false allegations dominating the South African media that his presidential plane was used as a conduit for trafficking two Malawians wanted by South African authorities. Notwithstanding, the Government of Malawi notes with concern that the statement falls short of acknowledging that the treatment President Chakwera was subjected to upon his departure was improper and incongruous to the warm hospitality he received upon his arrival.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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16th November, 2020