Professor A. Peter Mutharika, who is serving as Malawi’s Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, offered a personal account of the inner workings of his native country during his chair installation address.

Mutharika was formally installed as the Nagel Professor of International & Comparative Law on September 14, 2009. The installation was unusual in that Mutharika is currently on leave as a sitting member of Malawi’s parliament, as well as a cabinet member for the African country. At the ceremony, Chancellor Mark Wrighton, Emeritus Chancellor William Danforth, and Dean Kent Syverud all made formal remarks in recognition of Mutharika’s achievements in international law teaching and scholarship. They also noted his current commitment to making life better for Malawians while helping his country play a meaningful role in the international community.

Fittingly, the professorship is named for Charles Nagel, LLB 1875, who also was committed to public service. He was U.S. Secretary of Commerce and Labor under President Taft, a member of Washington University’s Board of Directors, and a part-time law lecturer. The estate of Nagel’s law partner, Daniel Noyes Kirby, LLB 1888, made the professorship possible.

Mutharika, who joined the law faculty in 1972, delivered an installation address on “The Role of the Minister of Justice in a Transitional Society: The Malawi Experience.” He discussed how he is currently putting a lifetime of legal teaching and scholarship into practice, as he helps lead constitutional reform and international law developments in Malawi.

Since his brother, Bingu wa Mutharika, was elected president in 2004 and re-elected in 2009, the country has made major strides, including achieving food sufficiency and being among the fastest growing economies in the world. Mutharika remarked on the tremendous responsibilities he has undertaken in his transition to legislator and policy administrator—with powers he must “exercise very wisely.”

“My responsibilities are to advise the president with respect to government policies, defend the government in parliament, present bills before parliament, defend the independence of the judiciary, and make sure that all ministries, departments, and agencies act within the Malawi Constitution and the rule of law,” he noted.