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'Economic trends no solution to poverty'

By Peter Nyanje

The most quoted economic trends indicating rises in national income cannot solve the poverty paradox, former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has said.

She told a national consultation conference on legal empowerment of the poor in Dar es Salaam yesterday that this is because even in improved conditions, as routinely presented by government officials and economists, the majority poor are usually left out.

"Today, the majority of the world's poor live outside the protections of



We have failed to look at poverty with the eye of the poor — Dr Albright

law: this makes them vulnerable and without a fair share of economic or political power," Dr Albright stated. She concurred with immediate

former President Benjamin Mkapa, who said in remarks at the launch of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor (CLEP), that many anti-poverty programmes had not produced good enough results because "we have failed to look at poverty with the eye of the poor".

According to Dr Albright, planners have not tried sufficiently to understand the obstacles to development from the insight of those struggling to overcome exclusion from the modern, formal and legal economy. "Our commission (CLEP) wants to explore options for expanding legal

rights that are practical and that will be accepted by the local cultures," she said, noting that this drive aimed at addressing shortcomings that have been impeding many people in the informal economy from making a breakthrough.

She explained that when people are the legal owners of their hand and homes, communities are more likely to be more stable and secure, adding: "People who have a legal stake in the communities are more likely to have hope; and those who have hope are

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more likely to care about the future."

The US diplomat described extreme poverty as a prison in which far too many people were trapped, saying that the prison was already overcrowded and without justice.

Addressing the conference, Dr Mkapa said lack of rights and protection on the part of the majority poor led to vulnerability and inequality that undermine many of the principles of good governance.

He cited lack of access to markets and services as factors retarding the potential for growth and development, noting that failure to build a fair and participative economy compounded the situation even further because the rules of the game differed.

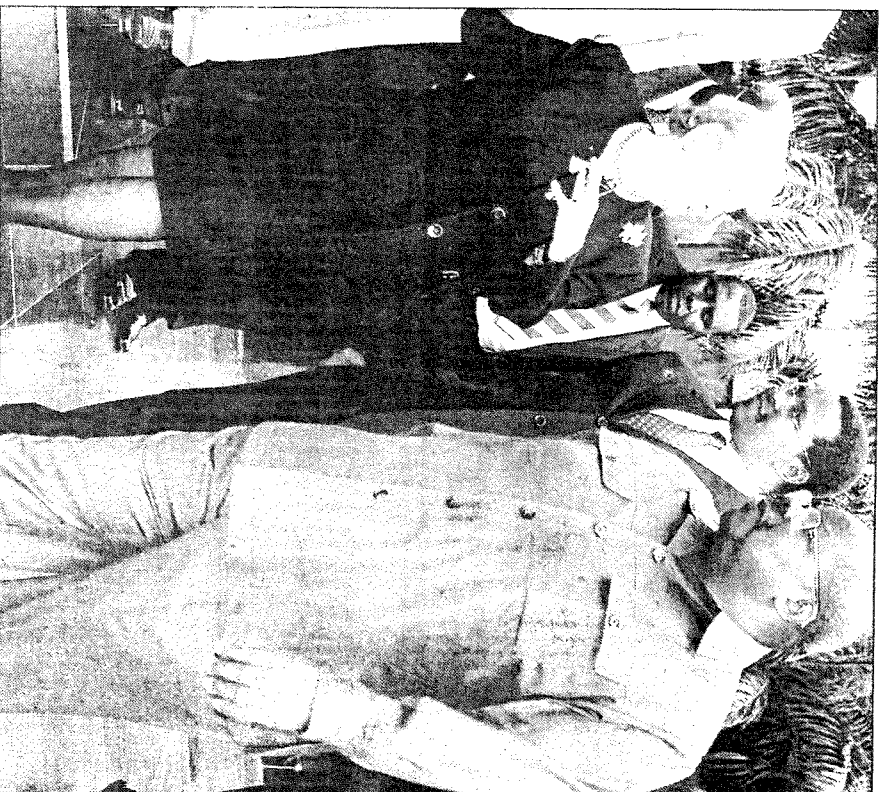
Opening the conference, President Jakaya Kikwete reiterated his Government's determination to implement the Property and Business Formalisation Programme, popularly referred to as Mikurabita. He said that although this was

tedious and long process, the Government was relentlessly pursuing it since it was the only appropriate way of bringing to the fold the millions of people whose activities fall outside the country's formal economy.

The two-day conference is hosted by the Mkurabita steering committee as a way of affording stakeholders an opportunity to discuss the best ways through which the poor could be empowered legally.

Mkurabita steering committee chairperson Anne Makinda, who doubts as the deputy Speaker of the Tanzanian National Assembly, said the implementation of the programme was proceeding as scheduled.

"We are working very hard and in one year's time we are sure that we will be in a position to present to the Government viable proposals on how the property formalisation process can be carried out to satisfaction. This roadmap will help the Government in solving problems associated with this issue," she said.



Dr Madeleine Albright, a member of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, speaks to President Jakaya Kikwete and fellow commission member Benjamin Mkapa at the Kilimanjaro Kempinski Hotel in Dar es Salaam yesterday. This was after President Kikwete had opened a national consultation conference on legal empowerment of the poor.