Africa is not a lost cause – Mkapa

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By Theo Mushi, recently in Berlin

Some African countries may not be on course to attain Millennium Development goals but Africa is not a lost cause, President Benjamin Mkapa has said.

In a closing statement at the International Policy dialogue on the Role of the Private sector to achieve Millennium Development Goals held in Berlin, Germany last week, the President said donors should increase flow of resources in terms of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and multilateral organisations like IMF and the World Bank should cancel all outstanding debts.

President Mkapa told the meeting of policy makers, businessmen and academia that it was true that Africa was the continent most at risk of not meeting Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

He noted, however, that Africa was a resilient continent and it was certainly not a lost case.

He said African Union and governments of African countries are committed to NEPAD "Peer Review" to ensure that there was democratic governance.

President Mkapa told the participants in the policy dialogue meeting that economically, Africa has begun to recover from bad years of the 1980s and 1990s and in 2003, Africa was second only to Eastern and Southern Asia as the fastest growing region in the developing world.

President Mkapa said African economies were increasingly better liberalized, managed and were nurturing macro-economic fundamentals.

He noted that progress has been made by African countries to keep fiscal deficits in check and focusing priority interventions in poverty reduction, and noted that many African countries had single digit inflation rates in 2003.

He said that at this time when Africa was increasingly being better governed economically and politically, the flow of Official Development Assistance, reaching only USD 19.4 billion in 2001.

He said Africa was not a lost continent and needs better and more effective and efficient external support to buttress its own efforts and it needs Foreign Direct Investment to create wealth, jobs and prosperity.

President Mkapa told the meeting that the dialogue had shown that German business and finance had every reason to be interested in Africa and other developing countries.

He said the private sector had an important and indispensable role to play in meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

He observed that more poverty was always a destabilizing force and a threat to human security, for both the rich and the poor.

President Mkapa said that there was a need to create a real smart partnership between governments and in both rich and poor countries to pursue the MDGs.

The MDGs goals include halving poverty levels by year 2015 and increase access to social services like education, health and sanitation.

Other goals are achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases.

The International Policy Dialogue meeting held in Berlin was organized by the Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development in collaboration with the Germany Development Bank (KFW).

* SOURCE: *GUARDIAN*