

We'll talk if MNR says no to violence — Chissano

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Herald Reporter

THE Mozambican government will talk to the South African-sponsored MNR bandits only if they renounce violence and want to be reintegrated into the community, President Joaquim Chissano told a two-day Socialist International meeting in Harare yesterday.

He said his government was determined to make every effort to put an end to Mozambique's holocaust. Since the government introduced an amnesty for all armed bandits, more than 3 000 had surrendered.

Cde Chissano said some people had spoken in good faith or disinformation of negotiations with the MNR bandits. "If those negotiations are meant to reintegrate in the community those willing to renounce acts of destruction of our society on behalf of external forces this approach appears to be acceptable," he said.

The Frelimo leader ruled out any negotiations aimed at reaching a compromise

with the bandits. "If the objective of the negotiations is to reach a compromise between those willing to build a Mozambican nation — united, free, independent, democratic and prosperous — and those sponsoring a foreign project aimed at rendering unviable our society while institutionalising instability and crime, perpetuating exploitation and underdevelopment, such a proposal goes against the national interests and the survival of an independent nation," President Chissano said.

The Mozambican president told the meeting of untold destruction caused by the MNR which he said was aimed at rendering the functioning of the organised society in the country unviable. The bandit activities did not seek to promote any political alternative to the state.

An analysis of the methods and targets of the bandits clearly showed that their aim was to destroy the social fabric, impede development of

productive forces and turn the people into permanent nomads. Both physically and socially, banditry was a form of genocide.

Cde Chissano said all efforts to develop the country were being thwarted by the MNR bandits. Direct and indirect damage caused by the war and economic destabilisation in Mozambique had cost US\$10 billion (\$20 billion), almost 2½ times the country's total foreign debt.

More than 3 000 schools had been destroyed since 1980 and 400 teachers kidnapped, maimed or murdered while 750 000 children had been deprived of education. About 900 rural hospitals and health posts had been burnt down, reducing the ratio of health units to people from one for every 9 700 to one for every 13 000.

More than one million homes and grain stores belonging to the rural population had been destroyed in more than 1 000 villages as well as 1 000 private shops.

About one-third of Mozambique's population had been displaced inside and outside the country. They had been prevented from occupying their homes and land, all their belongings were destroyed and they were living off international assistance at below survival level.

Vehicles, warehouses, drivers and staff of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organisations that were helping the victims were systematically subjected to attacks, looting and murder.

Member countries of SADCC had already suffered damage amounting to about US\$30 billion (\$60 billion), a figure that was by far higher than the region's foreign debt and international assistance.

The conflict in Southern Africa was borne out of opposition to principles, methods and objectives based on the need to perpetuate apartheid. Cde Chissano urged the international community not to create conditions that could jeopardise the self-determination and independence of Namibia or that might destabilise it in the future.

It was important for the international community to increase emergency aid to the victims of destabilisation.