

Mozambique government begins talk of 'dialogue' with rebels

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HARARE/ Amidst increased media speculation about the possibility of a Gbadolite-style peace settlement in Mozambique, the Mozambican government has begun to speak cautiously of a national "dialogue", writes a correspondent here.

This would include "those involved up till now in violent acts of destabilisation," a clear reference to Mozambique National Resistance (MNR/Re-namo) members, if not to the organisation itself.

The new position is outlined in a 12-point document which was circulated to embassies in Maputo in late June.

The text was also apparently made available to church representatives who have recently been involved in unofficial contacts with the MNR, with government permission.

[Recent press reports have spoken of Church mediation in Nairobi - see *SouthScan* v4/16 p124.]

Although the carefully-phrased document has no title, and carries no indications of its origin, there is no doubt of its authenticity.

Indeed, at a press conference in Beira on 23 June, on his return from the Gbadolite summit, Chissano's remarks appeared to have consciously echoed the tone and wording of the 12 points.

He said that it was enough for the MNR to renounce violence and to recognise the existing order, for the process of "normalising the lives of all Mozambican citizens" to begin.

This did not mean, said Chissano, that the existing order could not be modified; simply that it can only be changed "by the Mozambican people acting in unity."

He rejected foreign pressure, whether from the left or from the right.

The 12-point document, however, does not budge from the previous Frelimo position of refusing to recognize the MNR as a legitimate political organisation, stating in its opening lines that the country is "faced with a destabilisation operation, which must not be confused with a struggle between two parties."

It goes on to say that the first step must be to end "all terrorist and bandit acts."

As we go to press, unconfirmed reports from Lisbon state that the MNR leader Afonso Dlakama has in fact declared a ceasefire.

Another paragraph uses the phrase "normalising the lives of all Mozambican citizens," apparently a formula for reintegrating ex-MNR fighters into post-war society.

There is also a recognition that policies need to be established through a "process of consultation and debate with the populations and social groups

involved."

However, the government is careful not to suggest that democratic processes are a new phenomenon in Mozambique, pointing out that the laws on land, health and education already in force were approved after just such a process of consultation.

It also speaks of "growing factors of democratic participation," implying that what is required are improvements on existing mechanisms.

The document promises that freedom of religion, speech and assembly will be guaranteed, but goes on to say that these freedoms must not be used against the national interest.

Observers in Maputo believe that the proposals represent a significant, if as yet only private, extension of the two-year-old amnesty law which has already brought in about 3,000 ex-MNR members. However, it remains some distance from an acceptance of direct negotiations with the MNR as an organisation.