

Mozambican Government Ready To Start Meeting With Guerrillas

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NAIROBI, Kenya, July 17 — The President of Mozambique acknowledged today that Mozambican church leaders and a Government delegation were prepared to meet with representatives of the Government's guerrilla opponents.

The President, Joaquim Chissano, speaking at a news conference in Maputo, his country's capital, did not specifically say that the Government was ready to negotiate with the Mozambican National Resistance, the guerrilla group known as Renamo. But he said he had sent a 12-point "position paper" to the rebels, including a call for the guerrillas to renounce violence, and was awaiting a response.

The Renamo delegation failed to arrive for a scheduled session last week. Mr. Chissano said, according to accounts from diplomats in Maputo. But he said the government delegation and the church leaders, acting as intermediaries, still hoped for a meeting in the next few days.

Kenyan President to Help

Mr. Chissano did not elaborate on the Government proposal to the rebels. But he said President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya, acting as a peace broker, would fly to Maputo in the next three days to clarify the next steps.

A Western diplomat described Mr. Chissano's statements as a tremendous turnaround in that the President publicly stated his willingness to reach a settlement in the war, which has been going on since the country gained independence from Portugal in 1975.

Mr. Chissano had previously offered amnesty to the rebels, who were branded in a State Department report last year as among the most brutal in the world. But Western diplomats said

they had impressed upon Mr. Chissano that amnesty would not be enough to induce the rebels to end their violence, which has helped reduce Mozambique to one of the world's poorest countries and killed 100,000 people since 1984.

The President's statements today coincided with increased diplomatic activity in southern Africa to end the war and capitalize on a mood for peace created by the cease-fire agreement between the Angolan Government and rebel forces last month.

During a visit to Maputo several days ago, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, said Washington was accepting Mr. Chissano's invitation to be helpful in settling the war. But he was not specific about how Washington, which gives economic aid to the Chissano government but no military support, would proffer its help.

Another major figure in finding a settlement, the leader of South Africa's governing party, F. W. de Klerk, is due in Maputo this week.

The South African military took over the sponsorship of Renamo in 1980 after the demise of its creator, the white Rhodesian government. In 1984, South Africa and Mozambique signed a nonaggression pact, but South African support for the rebels continued. Last September, South Africa again promised it would not support Renamo, a pledge that diplomats say has been better kept, but not entirely.

Diplomats said that Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher told Mr. de Klerk, during his visit to London last month, that the South Africans must stop all assistance to Renamo. Britain is giving training to the weak and undisciplined Mozambican army.