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## Nkomati safety valve

Speculation in recent weeks indicated that the Nkomati Accord, which was signed by South Africa and Mozambique with great optimism only three years ago, was virtually a dead letter and of no practical value to either side. Both Pretoria and Maputo had been accusing each other of failing to honour the historic agreement and each had reason, if it so wished, to abrogate it. The Machel air crash and the Homoine massacre, with their accusations and recriminations adding to those about Pretoria's alleged aid to Renamo rebels and counter threats to retaliate for the Johannesburg blast, had brought relations to a low ebb.

But, as the conciliatory and constructive outcome of this week's talks in Maputo and Cape Town have shown, the Nkomati Accord still has the power to hold together a strained and fragile relationship. In fact, the talks in Cape Town yesterday ended on a cordial and constructive note with the formation of a joint working group to investigate the massacre and security arrangements generally.

It is graphic proof of the power of realistic economics and common interest to triumph over ideological differences and of the value of keeping channels open, of establishing and preserving safety valves — of talking and not shooting.