

SOUTH AFRICA AND MOZAMBIQUE TO RECONVENE JOINT SECURITY COMMISSION FOLLOWING SUCCESSFUL LIAISON MEETING

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Excerpts from dispatch datelined Maputo, 25th May. ME/0161 ii:

The Nkomati non-aggression pact between South Africa and Mozambique received a major boost today [25th May] with agreement by top official delegations at talks here to reconvene 'as soon as possible' the Joint Security Commission (JSC) which collapsed in 1985 as relations between the two countries deteriorated. A letter of 'goodwill' from State President, P. W. Botha, to President Joaquim Chissano was also handed over after the successful talks. South African officials expressed the hope at a press conference afterwards that foundations set today [25th May] would eventually result in a summit meeting between the two heads of state.

The S African Director-General of Foreign Affairs, Mr Neil van Heerden, who led the delegation from Pretoria, said in a joint statement issued after the talks that both governments had affirmed their commitment 'not to support the commission of violence' against each other's people and heralded a 'significant era' in positive relations between the two countries. Although the statement was not more specific about the revival of the JSC, it was understood immediate action was to be taken to set a date and that this could be within a few weeks.

Mr van Heerden said he did not want to disclose the contents of Mr P. W. Botha's letter, because President Chissano, who was presently visiting Japan, would not receive it for a while yet. It was, however, learned in Maputo that the letter amounted to a 'thank you' from Mr Botha to the Mozambique leader for his behind the scenes role for encouraging peace talks with Angola in London and Brazzaville in recent weeks. Mr Botha's letter, which was in response to a recent goodwill message from President Chissano, was handed over to the president of the People's Assembly, Mr Marcelino dos Santos effective number two in the Frelimo government.

In Maputo today [25th May], the joint communique issued after the talks said the delegations had 'addressed the fundamental implementation of the accord and in particular spoke frankly about the security problems and aspects of internal stability in the two countries' ... The South African delegation was led by Mr van Heerden, and consisted of the chief of the army, Lt-Gen 'Kat' Liebenberg, and senior officials of other government departments, including the National Intelligence Service and trade and industry (word indistinct). The Mozambican delegation was led by the chief of the army, Lt-Gen Tobias Dai. They met in the forum of the Joint Liaison Committee [JLC],

its fourth meeting since it was established following a meeting between Mozambique's Minister of Co-operation, Gen Jacinto Veloso, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Pik Botha, in Cape Town in August last year.

Mr van Heerden said note should be taken of the fact that the JLC was supposed to meet every month, but that it had not convened since January this year. The resumption of its activities today [25th May] was significant in terms revived relations. The JSC as opposed to the JLC was established to ensure the terms of the Nkomati peace pact were adhered to, and to monitor any breaches by either country. It met a number of times from its inception in 1984 until Mozambique withdraw towards the end of 1985. Speaking at the handing over ceremony of Mr Botha's letter, Mr dos Santos thanked Mr van Heerden and undertook to convey the letter to President Chissano who, he said would 'naturally know how to reply. I want to assure you, however, that Mozambique is firmly resolved to finding solutions to the problems between South Africa and Mozambique, as well as problems in the whole region'.

Speaking at the press conference in Pretoria after the South African delegation returned home, Mr van Heerden said of the talks 'I hope it is the start of a new beginning. A summit meeting between the two heads of state depends on agreement by them, but this kind of agreement today [25th May] has set the stage for close co-operation and hopefully and eventual meetings at the highest level.' He referred newsmen, asking whether the ANC presence in Maputo and alleged material support to Renamo rebel fighters in Mozambique from South Africa had been discussed, to the 'significance' of the re-affirmation of the governments' commitment not to support violence against their respective peoples.

Mr van Heerden also said the importance of today's agreement for the possible re-opening of the Cahora Bassa hydro-electric power line to South Africa, and positive trade developments in terms of imports and exports by South Africa through Maputo harbour, was also extremely significant. He emphasised, however, that there was 'a long way to go' in re-establishing sound relations between the two countries. There was long history of bad blood and a lot of mistrust on both sides, but the unanimous conclusion now was that something had to be done about it and the approach to today's meeting had been 'let's sit down and be sensible'.

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