Chissano accuses SA of delaying tactics

Maputo wants crash data

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MAPUTO — President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique yesterday accused South Africa of delaying investigations into the causes of the air crash which killed his predecessor, President Samora Machel.

Speaking to the diplomatic corps, President Chissano demanded access to the technical data being held by South Africa so that investigations into the crash could continue.

Ambassadors in the Mozambican capital were meeting President Chissano to congratulate him on his appointment.

He said that immediately after the crash South Africa claimed the accident had been accidental but had since then refused to hand over "the necessary elements needed for a clarification".

He accused Malawi of being a base for anti-government rebels but added that his country did not want war with Malawi and would make all possible diplomatic efforts to restore peace and good relations.

A South African team has arrived in Maputo for discussions over the flight recorders from the plane crash.

A member of the Mozambican commission probing the crash told reporters the South African team was expected to give Pretoria's response to a proposal on how to deal with the flight recorders. The proposal was adopted here on Monday by members of an international commission of inquiry into the crash.

Details of the proposal have not been released.

South Africa, which has kept the recorders since recovering them from the wreckage of Mr Machel's jet, wants independent experts to help decode them.

South African Civil Aviation chief director Mr Japie Smit said this week that Britain and the US were among a number of countries which had declined to join the investigation.

Switzerland had said it would handle the cockpit voice recorder, and one flight data recorder has been offered to the Soviets for decoding, but Switzerland yesterday changed its mind.

South Africa has apparently not found an impartial country to decode the second flight recorder. — Sapa-Reuter.