

MOZAMBIQUE: CHISSANO INTERVIEWED ON PEACE TALKS WITH MNR AND REVISION OF CONSTITUTION

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Excerpts from report (ME/0671 ii)

On his return from the Lusaka frontline summit, President Joaquim Alberto Chissano granted an interview to a number of journalists who had accompanied him to Zambia. The (?theme was) the Mozambican peace process. During the interview, Radio Mozambique correspondent Machado da Graca asked President Joaquim Chissano to comment on the so-called MNR head's claims that direct talks are scheduled to begin in Nairobi on 5th February.

[Recording - Chissano] I know nothing about that. What I know is that we, the People's Republic of Mozambique, have replied to the mediators' proposal on the need for direct talks. As you know, Presidents arap Moi and Mugabe are the mediators. In that reply, we (?asked) about the so-called MNR's stand concerning the mediators' ideas. I have not yet received any reply from the mediators.

We wanted to establish the framework within which [words indistinct] at least to know whether the so-called MNR would in fact agree to talk with the government of the People's Republic of Mozambique. That reply has not materialised.

What we have learned from press reports is that Dhlakama, in an interview with a US journalist, said he was not willing to talk with the Government of the People's Republic of Mozambique, particularly on the basis of [words indistinct], (?would) not even accept the principles the mediators themselves formulated and approved. So, I do not actually know what reply the mediators will give to our [words indistinct] we accept direct talks because we have worked all this time to build the foundations for direct talks between us and the leaders of the so-called MNR movement. Therefore, that claim of (?direct talks) on 5th February is news to me [words indistinct].

[Da Graca] Mr President, could you please discuss the proposal for revising 'the constitution within the context of peace in Mozambique?

[Chissano] ... We are demonstrating that the people have this right to express themselves [words indistinct] on the constitution which, as a matter of fact, is their law; and this revision enables them to be truly sovereign. It does not matter if they are illiterate [words indistinct]. We think [words indistinct]. Accordingly, this is the principal context on which this constitutional revision is based. Now, does it have anything to do with the negotiations? [Words indistinct] I can say indirectly yes. You must recall that this idea of revising the constitution [words indistinct].

Now, as I have pointed out, we have on various occasions - indirectly through emissaries - asked the MNR leaders what is it that they wanted. What was the objective of [words indistinct], whether what they wanted was exactly what we wanted. . .

We said [words indistinct]. To make changes in the constitution was not a problem as far as we were concerned, inasmuch as we were equally not satisfied with the constitution that we had drafted. [Words indistinct], reflection, growth, [words indistinct]. We asked emissaries to ask them. However, they said no, we do not want [words indistinct] negotiating table [words indistinct] in this way, I can say that [words indistinct] to bring about a greater understanding of what the People's Republic of Mozambique and even the Frelimo Party desire [words indistinct], and to contribute more ideas. There will be more ideas coming from right and left, and we want to ensure that our Constitution is not purely and simply a constitution that (words indistinct). It will (?not) be the first time that a country has had free and democratic elections [words indistinct], in a one-party system. In Tanzania, Zambia and so on, there are elections, There are times when these elections have two, three or four candidates for parliamentary seats or for the presidency of the republic. At the same time, there is also our party.

Accordingly, the existence of the party [words indistinct] does not mean that there cannot be [words indistinct].

In these countries, [words indistinct] people belonging to the same party. Likewise, it would not be the first time that a country has had independent candidates, independent candidates that do not belong to the party. They can be independent candidates even if they do not want to belong to the party. However, this (?has been) the result of our congress which opened the doors [words indistinct]; it broadened the possibilities for people to either belong to our party [words indistinct] related with discipline.

There are people who do not like party discipline and who decide not to belong to a party but who are not against the party. They may even be good people. The party can make use of them or they can also co-operate with the party. I know many people like that. Not long ago, here on board this plane, I spoke to many people who are not party members. However, I have no doubt in my mind that they are great supporters of our party. They could even give their life to defend our party, the Frelimo Party. However, they do not want, perhaps, to subject themselves to party discipline [words indistinct], party.

I work with some of them. I have worked with some people like that. Even you may have worked with some of these people. I do not dare ask if the people who are interviewing me here today are party members, but I know that few would be against the party. Accordingly, these people can become candidates for the presidency of the republic. Why not? They can even have [words indistinct] Why not? Accordingly, [words indistinct] mechanisms for the participation of candidates can be drafted [words indistinct]: I do not see any problem, particularly in our (?country). It can work. . .