

# Mozambique in direct talks with MNR bandits in Rome

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ROME.

THE Mozambican government and MNR bandits held their first direct talks in Rome this week and agreed to work for an end to the 15-year conflict in their country, the two sides said yesterday.

A joint statement issued after the talks said the two delegations were headed by Transport Minister Cde Armando Emilio Guebuza and Raul Manuel Domingos, the bandits' foreign affairs head.

"Both delegations said they were ready to commit themselves fully to the search for a working programme to end the war in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding," said the statement.

The meeting, held in a religious charity centre in Rome, was attended by an Italian government observer, Mr Mario Raffaelli, and Archbishop Jaime Goncalves of Beira.

The MNR bandits have fought brutally since independence from Portugal in 1975, bringing the country close to economic collapse.

Talks scheduled last month in Malawi collapsed when the bandit delegation failed to turn up. The statement said the delegations met from July 8 to 10 and another meeting would be held in Rome with the same observers.

The statement added: "The two delegations showed a desire and interest to do everything possible to complete a constructive process of research for a lasting peace for their people and their country."

The statement said the government and bandits recognised each other as compatriots and "members of the great Mozambican family".

They agreed "to put aside their divisions and to concentrate their attention on what unites them so as to create a common basis for a dialogue".

Father Maracito said the meeting resulted from separate discussions with the government and bandits over

the last year helped by Mozambique's Catholic church.

"The meeting took place at the community because we have had strong links with Mozambique for over 10 years and we enjoy the support of both," he said.

Sant'Egidio works with the poor and underprivileged in Italy but also organises international meetings and conferences.

The long bandit conflict in Mozambique, combined with severe drought and other economic problems, has made the country one of the poorest in the world and left a third of its 15 million people homeless.

President Joaquim Chissano is optimistic about the outcome of the talks.

He said the mediation role of President Mugabe and President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya had therefore come to an end. The second round of talks would take place at the same venue soon, he said.

A BBC report monitored in Harare last night said the reaction of people in Mozambique to the conclusion of the first round of talks was that of relief.

● MNR bandits killed another three people in an ambush in eastern Zambia, it was reported yesterday.

The three Zambians died when the bandits ambushed a truck on Tuesday near the town of Nyimba, 330 km east of Lusaka, the Zambia Daily Mail said.

The attack brings to 10 the number of people killed by bandits since Saturday in the Petauke district bordering Mozambique.

In an attack on Saturday in which seven people were axed to death, two people were also wounded and an unknown number kidnapped to act as porters carrying salt into Mozambique for the bandits, the Daily Mail said.  
— Ziana-Reuter-Herald Reporter.