

# Secret Mozambique peace talks held

## Hope for end to war this year

ROME. — The Mozambique government and right-wing Renamo rebels have held three days of secret peace talks here after 15 years of civil war, the sponsors told a news conference here yesterday.

"It is reasonable to hope that peace will be achieved by the end of the year," said Mr Mario Raffaelli, an Italian government observer at the discussions. "The talks were carried out in extreme secrecy and they are very high-level delegations."

The first direct talks between the warring parties since the civil war began took place in a Roman Catholic charity centre here amid tight secrecy and ended on Tuesday with a joint communique pledging to continue the peace process, the Italian sponsors said.

The official statement issued at the end of the talks, which was handed out at the news conference, said the two delegations agreed to continue working together to end the war and "to create the political, economic and social conditions to achieve a lasting peace".

The Mozambique government delegation was led by Transport Minister Mr Armando Guebuza and the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) rebels were represented by Mr Raul Domingos, head of Renamo's foreign affairs department.

The statement said the two delegations "recognised one another as compatriots and members of the great Mozambican family".

The talks were attended by Mr Raffaelli and two representatives of the Community of Sant' Egidio, a religious charity that hosted the secret meetings.

Mr Raffaelli told the news conference in Rome that the meeting had been set up through the mediation of the Kenyan and Zimbabwean governments.

He said the two sides had agreed to meet again in Italy within a month. The delegations had not discussed a ceasefire but would be raising the issue at the next session.

Mr Raffaelli, a politician who was formerly under-secretary in the Italian Foreign Ministry with responsibility for Southern Africa, attributed the success of the talks to the recent improvement in East-West relations.

"The whole climate has changed completely," he said. "The Soviet Union is no longer seen as a threat by South Africa and the South Africans no longer enjoy unquestioned military superiority in the region."

He said South Africa had played no direct role in the talks but its decision to cut off arms supplies to the rebels had increased Renamo's willingness to embark on talks.

Mr Raffaelli said Italian Foreign Minister Mr Gianni De Michelis had discussed regional issues at a meeting with a South African delegation in March at the celebrations to mark Namibian independence in Windhoek.

He said the South African government had requested the talks, which had been unexpectedly attended by President F W de Klerk. — UPI