

# Further delays in peace talks

Peace talks between the Mozambican government and Renamo were scheduled to restart in Rome on 1 July. But, as with the previous round, Renamo's delaying tactics held proceedings up, and it was not until 19 July that both delegations were in the Italian capital.

Even then the delegations did not meet face to face. Renamo's team, led by the head of the Foreign Affairs Department, Raul Domingos, refused to restart the negotiations, using as its excuse alleged communication difficulties between the negotiators in Italy and Renamo commanders in Mozambique.

There exists a radio link between Rome and the Renamo-held zone of Canxixe in the central province of Sofala. This link is via Malawi, but in June the Malawian authorities expelled the Renamo radio operators under circumstances that are far from clear.

According to AIM's sources in Rome, the Malawian government considered that the behaviour of the Renamo technicians was "unacceptable", but the exact reasons for the Malawian decision are not yet known.

The Italian mediators, through the Italian ambassador in Maputo, Manfredo di Camerana, worked to unblock the problem with the Malawians. Mr di Camerana visited the Malawian city of Blantyre to urge the authorities to let the Renamo radio operators return (at the time they were waiting across the border in Zambia).

According to Mario Raffaelli, the Italian socialist parliamentarian who coordinates the mediating team, the real reason the Malawians had cut the radio link was that they wanted a formal statement from the Mozambican government that the presence of Renamo radio operators in Malawi would not be regarded as a hostile act.

Apparently such a declaration was made, since on 30 July, Raul Domingos told AIM that the radio link had been re-established, and that his delegation would be ready to return to the negotiating table once tests showed that the line was working.

Renamo's tale about the radio link is not entirely convincing. They had known since June that the link was out of operation, and yet Domingos' delegation had been prepared to travel to Rome in mid-July, giving the impression to both the government and the mediators that they were prepared to restart the talks.

The government delegation, led by Transport Minister Armando Guebuza, made it clear they were willing to restart the talks at any moment: they were just waiting for the mediators to tell them when Renamo would be ready.

In an interview with AIM, Mr Raffaelli blamed the slowness of the talks on "an excess of prudence on

the part of Renamo". He believed that Renamo was afraid that the government might use the peace process to gain political advantages.

He said the mediators were trying to overcome Renamo's suspicions by installing mutual trust between the two sides. "The mechanisms to be established - a joint politico-military commission, international supervision of the ceasefire, with the probable involvement of the United Nations and others - will not be designed to favour either Renamo or Frelimo, but to ensure that the two sides, and the other opposition parties, will be able to transmit freely and effectively their political messages", Mr Raffaelli said.

While kicking their heels in Rome, the Renamo delegation spread a rumour that the Mozambican government was planning to assassinate Renamo leader Alfonso Dhlakama. The Renamo Secretary for Information, Vicente Ululu, told AIM that his organisation's intelligence services possessed information showing that the government intended to assassinate Dhlakama, either in the Renamo bases in central Mozambique, or while travelling outside the country.

According to Ululu, this supposed assassination plot was the reason why Dhlakama cancelled a meeting scheduled in Rome on 19 July with the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jeffrey Davidow.

Ululu said that the Mozambican air force had launched raids against Renamo bases in the centre of the country, and this "proved" there was a plan to kill Dhlakama.

Asked to comment, a member of the government delegation described Ululu's allegations as "ridiculous".

He said the death of Dhlakama would be "the worst thing" that could happen for the peace process, since it would result in Renamo becoming "even more incoherent".

Military operations certainly were underway in Sofala province in mid-July, and probably made it impossible for Dhlakama to slip out of Mozambique to Malawi, his usual staging post on trips abroad. He cancelled not only the meeting with Davidow, but also a visit to Portugal.

Davidow was in Maputo on 11-12 July, where he met with President Chissano to discuss what support the United States could provide "to assist the dialogue between the government and Renamo".

At a press conference before his departure, Davidow said he had not brought any specific proposals for the consideration of the Mozambican authorities, but hoped that his visit would contribute to "the growing international efforts to secure a lasting peace".