

Mozambique needs help to reach peace

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THERE was little ground for optimism that Mozambican peace negotiations would bear fruit in the near future. That was the unanimous conclusion of participants at a workshop organised this week by the SA Institute for International Affairs.

Third parties like SA had a vital role to play — as well as much to lose from continued war. There was disagreement, however, as to whether they should use the stick or the carrot to help bring about peace.

The Department of Foreign Affairs's Les Labuschagne argued for the carrot. He believed that Renamo would be encouraged to the negotiating table if it were taken more seriously by the West.

Durban academic Jeremy Greest disagreed. He believed only a policy of "active interdiction" would work. It was not enough for the SA government to cease active support for Renamo, he argued. What was needed was for it to take steps to end support from other quarters as well.

The changed nature of Renamo's support was noted. Whereas SA used to be the organisation's main backer, it now enjoyed support from a range of right-wing groups in the US and Germany, from the Kenyan government as well as from private groups in Portugal and SA.

ANC delegate Temba Tabeta suggested that the SA government had established Renamo and therefore was arguably best able to influence them. Labuschagne retorted that during the Rome negotiations, the Renamo delegation had refused to meet SA representatives. They appeared concerned to maintain credibility as being independent of SA support.

The general consensus was that Renamo had little incentive to end the war. It was unlikely to win an election. Too many people had suffered its depredations; Frelimo had introduced many of the reforms it had originally called for, and it was in no danger of being defeated militarily by the Mozambican government.

Given this situation, said Wits international relations specialist Chris Alden, a resolution to the conflict which accommodated the interests of both parties was unlikely to be found. The alternative was for a "coercive solution" to be applied.

Since there was little international interest in Mozambique, SA was potentially a major player.