

# Chissano rules out 4 meeting MNR leader

VALLETTA (Malta).

PRESIDENT JOAQUIM CHISSANO of Mozambique said on Tuesday he was optimistic about the outcome of talks in Rome between his government and the MNR bandits but ruled out meeting the main bandit leader.

"My delegation is optimistic because we have always been very flexible," President Chissano told a news conference after talks with Italian Prime Minister Mr Giulio Andreotti in Malta.

Asked about the possibility of a first face-to-face meeting with Afonso Dhlakama, the MNR bandit leader, he said: "I don't know where anyone has got such an idea."

Cde Chissano, in Malta for an international peace vigil, added: "There has never been any question of such a meeting either here or in Rome."

The Mozambique government and the bandits began an eighth round of peace talks in Rome on Monday.

The negotiations, on and off for the past 18 months, have made little progress.

A spokesman for Mr Andreotti said Cde Chissano had told the Italian government that as far as he was concerned "there are no problems (at the talks) that cannot be solved".

As well as Mozambican Catholic church leaders, Italy is also mediating in the talks. — Ziana-Reuters.

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