

# Eighth round of talks agrees on political principles

The eighth round of peace talks between the Mozambican government and Renamo began in Rome on October 7 in a haze of optimism, stimulated by upbeat statements by the Italian government and Catholic Church mediators, and by the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen.

Speaking to journalists in Lisbon on 30 September, Mr Cohen said that the mediators had come up with a new formula to unblock the talks, after consultations with the US and with Portugal. He stressed American support for the Italian mediating team who, he said, had "done a good job".

Mr Cohen announced that he hoped to meet with Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama in the near future with the intention of persuading Dhlakama "that serious negotiation would be in Renamo's interest, and in that of all who are interested in Mozambique".

He added that the United States is "encouraging all the interested governments" to establish "more contacts with Renamo", considering that "this would be very useful" in the search for peace in Mozambique.

The talks themselves started with a brief formal session at Vila Madama, an international conference centre just outside Rome. As at the previous rounds the two delegations were led by Mozambican Transport Minister Armando Guebuza, and by the head of the Renamo Foreign Affairs Department, Raul Domingos. But the talks immediately broke for three days to allow Matteo Zuppi and Andrea Riccardi, the two mediators from the Catholic charity, the Santo Egidio Community, to attend the World Peace Forum on the Mediterranean island of Malta.

## Chissano denies meeting with Dhlakama

Speculation was rife that Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano would meet with Dhlakama on Malta, but on arrival at the Maltese capital, La Valeta, Mr Chissano flatly denied these rumours, saying that the possibility of such a meeting had never even been discussed.

The president asked an insistent Reuters correspondent what the source of the rumour was, and the journalist replied that the Catholic Archbishop of Beira, Jaime Gonçalves, had informed him that Dhlakama had also been invited to participate in the Malta ceremony.

(Gonçalves heads the most conservative wing of the Mozambican Catholic church, and among the four official mediators he is the one with the closest links to Renamo.)

Mr Chissano noted that elections should have taken place in Mozambique in 1991, but that continued warfare had forced the government to postpone them.

"This is a decision that we have to discuss not only with Renamo, but with the other political formations emerging in the country", he said.

In Rome, the talks did not resume in plenary session as soon as expected. Instead the mediators began shuttling backwards and forwards between the hotels where the two delegations were staying, a sure sign that the negotiations had, once again, run into difficulties.

The key problem was that of reciprocal "political guarantees", which Renamo was demanding as a precondition before discussing any item on the agenda for the talks, agreed on back in May.

At the abortive seventh round of talks, in August, the mediators presented a document on "political guarantees" which the government delegation considered "a very serious piece of work". However Renamo had abruptly rejected the document as "inopportune and devoid of interest".

The mediators had then held separate meetings, in Maputo with the Mozambican authorities, and in Malawi with Dhlakama, trying to smooth things over. It was believed that this had worked, and that Renamo would implicitly recognise the Mozambican state, government and laws.

Renamo, however, produced a counter-proposal trying to commit the government not only to abstain from approving new laws that touch on the matters under discussion in Rome, but also to review all existing legislation that may contradict anything agreed in the negotiations.

The government continued to push for some kind of formal Renamo recognition of the established political order in the country and of the Mozambican state and its institutions.

Eventually, on 18 October, after the talks had come close to collapse, and after six draft agreements had been considered, these positions were reconciled, and the two sides signed "Protocol Number One", on basic political principles.

In this protocol, the government pledged that it will not introduce new laws or measures, nor implement existing ones, that may prove contrary to anything agreed at Rome. In return, Renamo

## Text of Protocol Number One

The following is AIM's English translation of the text of the five points that form the protocol on basic political guarantees, signed in Rome by Armando Guebuza for the government and Raul Domingos for Renamo on 18 October:

1. The government undertakes not to act in a way contrary to the terms of the protocols to be established, and not to adopt laws or measures or to enforce existing laws which may contradict those same protocols.

2. For its part, Renamo undertakes, as from the entry into effect of a ceasefire, not to fight by force of arms, but to wage its political struggle in observance of the laws in force, in the framework of the existing state institutions, and in respect for conditions and guarantees set

down in a general peace agreement.

3. Both sides commit themselves to reaching a general peace agreement as soon as possible, containing protocols on each one of the points on the agenda adopted on 28 May 1991, and to take the actions necessary to this end. In this context, the government shall be committed to placing no obstacles in the path of Renamo's travel abroad and international contacts in the framework of the peace negotiations. With the same purpose, contacts will also be possible inside the country between Renamo and the mediators or members of the Joint Verification Commission. The specific modalities for holding such contacts should be established case by case, at the request of

the mediators to the government.

4. The protocols to be agreed in the course of these negotiations shall be an integral part of the general peace agreement, and they shall take effect on the date on which this general agreement is signed, with the exception of article three of this present protocol which takes effect immediately.

5. The two sides agree in principle that a commission shall be set up to supervise and control implementation of the general peace agreement. The commission will consist of representatives of the government and of Renamo, as well as of the United Nations, and of other organisations and governments to be agreed upon by the two sides.

pledged that, immediately after a ceasefire takes effect, it will end its violence and "wage its political struggle in observance of the laws in force, in the framework of the existing state institutions, and in respect for conditions and guarantees set down in a general peace agreement".

This did not quite amount to recognising the government, but it did clearly commit Renamo to working within the existing political order.

The most difficult point in the protocol is a clause committing the government not to hinder Renamo's "travel abroad and international contacts in the framework of the peace negotiations". Renamo had initially demanded a clause allowing unhindered travel wherever it liked and for whatever purpose it wanted. The government delegation managed to insert the limiting words "in the framework of the peace negotiations", but even so, it is only too likely that Renamo could present any Mozambican military offensive against its strongholds in the centre of the country as designed to prevent its leaders travelling abroad for tasks related, in one way or another, to the peace talks.

The two sides also agreed, in principle, to the establishment of an international monitoring commission to control implementation of any eventual peace accord. This commission would include representatives of the government and of Renamo, from the United Nations, and from other mutually acceptable organisations and governments.

Explaining this agreement at a press conference in Maputo on 21 October, President Chissano stressed that the current government would continue ruling Mozambique in the interval between a ceasefire and general elections. There was no question of a "caretaker administration", or of handing over most of the functions of the government to the United Nations, as Renamo had been demanding in August.

## The government will still govern

Mr Chissano pointed out that Renamo's acceptance that it would work in the "framework of existing state institutions" meant that "it is this government that will continue to govern" in the run-up to elections.

The monitoring commission mentioned in the protocol "will not govern the country", added the President.

He denied that the protocol was a "capitulation" by the Mozambican government. There was "a balance" between the undertakings given by the government and by Renamo.

Mr Chissano said he hoped the agreement "will establish greater trust between the delegations" and would make it possible to speed matters up.

## Renamo promises to cease attacks on Limpopo Corridor

In a note dated 14 October, Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama promised that his forces would no longer attack the Limpopo Corridor, the strategic rail link between southern Zimbabwe and the port of Maputo.

This amounts to a pledge that Renamo will finally abide by the agreement that it signed with the government on 1 December 1990, under which both the Limpopo and the Beira Corridors were to be free from attack. In exchange for the redeployment of all Zimbabwean troops inside Mozambique to within the two corridors.

But Renamo repeatedly violated the agreement, and in

February announced its intention of resuming full scale attacks on the Limpopo line, using as justification a claim that Zimbabwean forces were still stationed in dozens of places outside the corridors.

However, the International Joint Verification Commission (JVC) monitoring the December 1990 agreement could find no evidence of any Zimbabwean presence when it investigated 18 of the places named by Renamo as harbouring Zimbabwean troops.

The JVC condemned Renamo's attacks on the Limpopo line, stressing that "deliberate violations of the agreement are considered by

the international community as a serious attempt to hinder the ongoing peace process as well as a demonstration of bad faith by the violating party".

The Italian ambassador in Mozambique, Manfredo di Camerana, who chairs the JVC, greeted the Renamo October promise with relief.

But there are signs that perhaps this latest Renamo promise should not be taken any more seriously than the earlier ones. On 31 October the Limpopo line was sabotaged yet again, and a goods train was derailed.

"What we always advocated was that an agreement on principles was required for the dialogue", he added.

Nonetheless, although he accepted that the protocol was an important step forward, "it's still not what we were waiting for", said the President. "What we hoped for is a ceasefire agreement, so that the lives of Mozambicans can be normalised in the spirit of reconciliation".

Mr Chissano was not sure that a ceasefire could be signed by the end of the year "but the possibility is there because, after signing this agreement, I cannot see any more difficulties in the issues to come".

"I don't know about Renamo's side, but I can see from the government's side that the issues in front of us are, or should be, easy to tackle", he said. But he added the caution that "a great deal of patience will still be necessary".

Asked whether the government's commitments under the protocol might not be unconstitutional, Mr Chissano said he expected no conflicts between agreements with Renamo and the new constitution.

"If there is anything in our laws that is contrary to the protocols, we will already have taken this into consideration, and any signature of protocols will take this into account", he said. "The competent bodies will make the necessary amendments or decrees so that everything remains legal".

He said that Renamo would have to register as a political party, just as the ruling Frelimo Party has done. But he implied that the requirement to provide a list of at least 100 members or supporters from each of the country's 11 provinces might be waived in the case of Renamo.

"This question does not have to be asked", said Mr Chissano. "They are fighting us in every province".

Asked about a possible meeting between himself and Dhlakama, the President said this could only be justified if, on returning from such a meeting, he could announce that peace had been achieved. Without this, "such a meeting would not make sense, and I think that Renamo knows this".

The Rome talks resumed on 22 October, with Mr Guebuza optimistic that the protocol on basic principles would make it easier to deal with the political and military questions on the agenda.

## Renamo rejects timetable for talks

Asked about the chances of reaching a ceasefire by the end of 1991, Renamo delegation leader Raul Domingos declined to consider any timetable. This, he claimed, was so as to avoid causing "frustration among the people".

Mr Guebuza, however, declared that the government delegation "has always been ready to discuss all points on the agenda, up to and including a ceasefire".

For the mediators, Matteo Zuppi said the two sides should remember that, in the 18 October protocol, they had pledged to reach a general peace accord as soon as possible. He hoped that "there can now be speedier negotiations", adding, prophetically, "although our desires do not always translate into facts".

The mediators produced a working document on the subject of the creation and legal recognition of

political parties, the first point on the agenda, and Renamo presented a counter-proposal, which the government found a reasonable basis for discussion. It dropped the positions which Renamo had held during the sixth and seventh rounds and which the government had considered unacceptable.

Renamo had then demanded that political parties be registered, not by the Ministry of Justice, as stipulated in the existing law, but by a "neutral" body responsible to the UN Security Council. This demand had now disappeared, and the Renamo response to the mediators explicitly accepted that registration fell within the competence of the government.

Despite this, the days passed, the mediators worked on fresh syntheses of the positions of the two delegations - and still nothing was signed. As the talks slowed to a snail's pace, the early atmosphere of optimism gradually dissipated.

The United States stepped in again at the end of the month, with US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jeffrey Davidow, meeting on 31 October separately with the Mozambican government delegation and with the mediators.

At the end of these meetings, he said he had reaffirmed the United States' commitment to the search for peace in Mozambique, and its offer of whatever assistance may be requested by the parties directly involved.

He said he believed the dialogue between the government and Renamo had made progress, but "there are still mutual suspicions between the two delegations".

He described the October 18 protocol as a step in the right direction, but urged increased contact between the two sides in order to eliminate the prevailing climate of mistrust.

Mr Davidow then flew on from Rome to Geneva where he intended to meet with Dhlakama. He said he intended to tell the Renamo leader "that it is necessary to negotiate seriously with the government, and to understand that the United States is committed to the Mozambican peace process".

But by 3 November, the talks appeared to be going backwards. Fresh obstacles to an agreement on political parties had arisen, concerning the mechanisms for dealing with complaints of any irregularities in the registration process.

Renamo wanted to see the supervisory commission for the transitional period before general elections given strong powers to intervene in the resolution of such complaints. The government argued that this was a task that should fall exclusively within the competence of the courts.

At root, this was once more a dispute over the authority of the government and other state institutions in the period between any cease fire and elections.

## Cahora Bassa repairs to start next year

Work on rebuilding the transmission lines carrying electricity from the Cahora Bassa dam in the northwestern Mozambican province of Tete to South Africa should begin at the start of 1992, according to Ian McRae, chairman of the South African state electricity company, ESKOM.

Speaking at a Johannesburg press conference on 22 October, Mr McRae said the rebuilding would continue regardless of the state of the peace negotiations between the Mozambican government and Renamo.

Mr McRae denied South African press reports according to which ESKOM provides Renamo with military and logistical support.

He said that ESKOM, as a member of the Permanent Joint

Committee (PJC) on Cahora Bassa, formed between Mozambique, Portugal and South Africa, had made direct contact with the Renamo commander-in-chief, Afonso Dhlakama, in order to discuss the security of the transmission lines.

In theory, ESKOM is the main client for Cahora Bassa electricity. In practice, no power at all flows to South Africa, because Renamo has blown up over 1,400 pylons within Mozambique. This causes immense losses for the dam company, Hidroelectrica de Cahora Bassa, which is 80 per cent owned by Portugal.

Mr McRae said ESKOM had extracted a promise from Dhlakama that there would be no further sabotage of the transmission lines. He added that, as far as he was aware, so

far Renamo has kept this promise.

The ESKOM chairman said 50 million rands (about US\$ 18 million) for the rebuilding would be provided by the South African Merchant Bank, with surety from the South African government, while Italy was providing a loan of 170 million rands to the Mozambican government for the work.

A further 280 million rands will be necessary, and Mr McRae said that the PJC was seeking further sources of finance. He said the World Bank was ready to provide this loan, if no other source of funding could be found. The offer had not been formally made, he added, since the World Bank was reluctant to increase the debt that Mozambique already has with it.