

Talks to end civil war in Mozambique resume

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ROME. — Mozambique peace talks were to resume in Rome today amid new hopes that the end of the country's 16-year civil war was in sight.

"We now have a chance to end the conflict," said Mr Don Matteo Zuppi, who has helped mediate the year-long talks between the government and Right-wing guerrillas of the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo).

He said the pace of the negotiations may quicken following agreements reached in November on the creation of political parties and on the conduct of the talks themselves.

"There's a much more

positive climate after the signing of the protocols. There's a will to resolve the problems," he said.

But he played down earlier hopes of a Christmas cease-fire in the war that has cost over a million lives since 1975.

"The (remaining issues) can't be resolved in only a little time," said Mr Zuppi, of Rome's Sant'Egidio religious community which has worked with the Italian government and other Roman Catholic churchmen to mediate eight previous rounds of talks.

Mozambican Prime Minister Mario da Graça Machungo told a news conference earlier this month an end to the war

was possible "in the very near future".

The latest talks were scheduled to begin last week but were delayed by the onset of Mozambique's rainy season, which made travelling difficult for some delegates, Mr Zuppi said. — Sapa-Reuter.