

Boost for Mozambique peace hopes

HARARE — Prospects for peace in Mozambique have been boosted by apparently successful talks in Malawi between President Hastings Banda, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama.

However the withdrawal of Zimbabwean troops from Mozambique was not discussed at Thursday's crucial meeting, the Zimbabwean leader said on his return to Harare.

That would be a matter for the peace talks in Rome, said Mr Mugabe, but once the peace process was concluded the troops would not stay a day longer in Mozambique. It was not necessary for them to be there until peace had been established.

ROBIN DREW

Talks between Mozambique's warring factions have been spluttering along in Rome for the past two years, without nearing a solution.

President Mugabe said that Mr Dhlakama was a man with some ideas who was anxious to secure the position of Renamo. It was possible there would be more meetings in the future.

This represents a major change in the Zimbabweans attitude to the rebel leader, who has in the past only been referred to as a "bandit" — usually appended as

being supported by the "South African regime".

He said he and Dr Banda had tried to influence Mr Dhlakama positively and had emphasised the need for peace.

The meeting with the Renamo leader represents an important breakthrough in the search for a peaceful settlement and follows last month's meeting in Beira between Mr Mugabe and President Chissano.

Zimbabwean troops are confined to the transport corridors to Beira and Maputo in terms of the partial ceasefire agreement.

Mr Mugabe's comments were made to reporters on the tarmac when he flew back to Harare.