

# Sharp divisions haunt ④ Mozambican peace talks

*Herald 15/6/92*

MAPUTO.

A NEW round of peace talks between the Mozambican government and rebels has got off to a bumpy start as the two sides remained sharply divided over preconditions for discussion on military issues that may bring about an end to the 16-year civil war.

The 11th round of Mozambican peace talks was officially opened last Tuesday in Rome under the mediation of the Italian government and Catholic Church.

On Thursday, delegates from the Mozambican government and MNR bandits held separate talks with the Italian mediators which, however, failed to overcome the divergences as MNR insisted that a ceasefire can be discussed only after agreement is reached on amending the existing constitution.

According to a report of the Mozambique Information Agency, MNR reiterated on Thursday that it will agree to talk about military matters leading up to a cessation of hostilities only after obtaining

guarantees that the two sides will discuss constitutional questions before a ceasefire.

MNR had persisted in calling for the suspension of several articles in the existing constitution, which caused an eventual breakdown of last round of peace talks held in Rome in February and March.

However, MNR leader Mr Afonso Dhlakama, during a meeting with US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Mr Herman Cohen in Malawi on April 25, pledged to move ahead with discussion on military matters and leave constitutional disputes to be handled in line with the agenda of the talks.

The Mozambican government, which has voiced its readiness to sign a ceasefire, criticised the bandits for their "lack of sincerity" in the peace talks whose agenda, agreed upon by the two rivals in May last year, has given prominence to such urgent military issues as a timetable for a ceasefire and the formation of a new and non-party national army.

Meanwhile, the Patriotic Action Front, one of Mozambique's new opposition parties, has issued an

appeal to the government and MNR delegations at the Rome peace talks "to reach a peace agreement as rapidly as possible so as to improve the life of millions of Mozambicans who are living in extreme poverty".

The appeal, signed by Fap general secretary Mr Raul de Conceicao, declares that "fratricidal wars never led any country to prosperity. They merely lead to moral decay, misery and chaos".

Fap urges that the two delegations "put an end to attempts to resolve ideological differences by force of arms".

"Neither side has the right to claim support from or control over the majority of Mozambicans," the Fap statement continues. "Let them end the war and give the people, whom they claim to trust, the chance to choose their legitimate representatives."

The appeal urges the two sides to allow "corridors of peace" to be opened to allow food aid convoys to reach Mozambicans throughout the country who are at risk of starvation. — Ziana-Xinhua-AIM.