

Mozambique peace talks get new boost

From MICHAEL HARTNACK

SHARARE — President Joaquim Chissano yesterday announced readiness for his first face-to-face meeting with Mr Alfonso Dhlakama, leader of the Mozambique Resistance Movement (Renamo) in the 17-year Mozambican civil war.

Mr Chissano (Dhlakama) claim Pretoria was still giving covert help to Mr Dhlakama.

Until South Africa's 1984 Nkomati Accord with the late President Samora Machel, aid was supplied openly, but Mr De Klerk insists this has been severed.

Diplomatic sources here have long believed South African involvement was essential to bringing the rebels conclusively to the peace table.

"I and all Mozambique's people will do all that we can to bring a ceasefire and peace," Mr Chissano said at the end of his talks with Mr Mugabe.

"I will do everything in my power so the meet-

ing can be soon." President Chissano added, adding to complain the rebels have deliberately stalled two years of peace talks convened in Rome through the Roman Catholic Church and the Italian Government.

Mr Mugabe, who has had two recent meetings with Mr Dhlakama in Malawi and Botswana in the hope of finalising a ceasefire, had previously striven to keep Pretoria out of the Mozambican peace process, diplomatic sources say.

"I am only hopeful that Mr Dhlakama will live up to his word," President Mugabe said.

"All of us in this region are very desirous that peace come to Mozambique and of course we would also like to see peace coming to South Africa."

With fighting obstructing the distribution of famine relief, the whole

southern African region in the grip of the worst drought for a century, and half Mozambique's people uprooted from their homes, the need for immediate peace was never greater, say international agencies.

Since Mr Chissano's ruling Frelimo Party renounced the strict Marxist-Leninist ideology with which it came to power at independence from Portugal in 1975, differences with the right-wing rebels have centred on Renamo participation in government and the security forces.

Diplomatic sources say the Zimbabwean leader is as anxious as his neighbour not to let the rebels gain a stranglehold on the government of the strategic Indian Ocean country, which shares an uncontrollable 700 km border with Zimbabwe and dominates its road, rail and oil pipeline access to the sea.