

# Chissano's peace offer 'rejected'

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ROME. — President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique said yesterday he had offered rebels an immediate cessation of hostilities to end 16 years of civil war but that this had been rejected.

Mr Chissano, who met rebel leader Mr Afonso Dhlakama here on Wednesday for the first time, said negotiators were instead drawing up a calendar for a general ceasefire that could be signed in the next few months.

He said it was possible a ceasefire calendar would be approved by the two sides later by the end of the week.

The two sides also agreed on the role of a United Nations peace monitoring group.

"I proposed an immediate cessation of hostilities. A truce is the wrong word as it implies a pause before the fighting resumes... but Dhlakama rejected this," Mr Chissano said in a joint interview with Reuters and Portuguese state television.

He explained that Mr Dhlakama, leader of the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo), had told him he doubted the men in the field would obey orders to stop fighting at once.

"I told him my armed forces were willing to stop immediately. I said my officers were ready... but he said his men were not prepared... and probably not disposed to obey."

Mr Chissano said Mr Dhlakama seemed to care more about making sure that any ceasefire should hold



PEACE OFFER ...  
President Chissano

REBEL LEADER  
Mr Dhlakama

once it had been signed.

The rebel leader's dilemma highlighted a problem that diplomats involved in the two-year-old negotiations between Renamo and the Mozambique government in Rome have long warned of — that no one really controls some of the guerillas.

## 600 000 lives

Mr Chissano said he would be satisfied if the Rome summit produced a declaration that mapped out the exact path to peace, although he felt it was absurd to go on fighting once all sides were in agreement.

The 15-year war between the Frelimo government and Renamo has claimed more than 600 000 lives, has driven a million people into exile, and has left half the remaining population of 15 million starving and in need of donated food. — Sapa-Reuter