

Peace comes to Mozambique

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ROME — President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique and Renamo rebel leader Afonso Dhlakama sealed an accord yesterday to end 16 years of civil war by October 1, ending three days of talks with an emotional embrace.

"This is a historic day for the people of Mozambique and Africa. Please. No more deaths. No more war," Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe, who brought the two foes together for the first time, said after the signing ceremony.

Chissano, who called the rebel leader "dear brother", expressed regret that the fighting was not ending at once, despite his offer of an immediate armistice.

"It would undoubtedly have been more honourable if our meeting had meant the end of the war, today. There is no reason why the guns should not fall silent," Chissano said.

Catastrophe

"Although the war will continue a little longer, the fact that we know it will end by October 1 is a consolation."

A six-page accord said both the government and Renamo were "determined to do all in our power to end the catastrophe resulting from the combined effects of the war and the drought.

**FORMER
foes have
created hope
for peace in a
war-weary
Mozambique
now also
racked by
drought.**

Hugs as war set to end on October 1

in our country".

Mugabe, the architect of the Rome talks, urged Renamo not to try to grab more territory in the coming weeks to strengthen its negotiating hand and said the government should not try to flush out rebels from their positions.

"That would mean more war and more people dying. The next two months are crucial," Mugabe said.

The civil war, which began a year after independence from Portugal in 1975, has cost more than a million lives and brought one of the world's poorest countries to its knees. This year, the horrors of war have been compounded by a devastating drought.

Chissano warned before the talks began on Wednesday that over

half of Mozambique's population could no longer feed itself.

The Renamo leader, defending his decision to reject an immediate truce, said it was "not enough to just call a ceasefire. You must have the proper mechanisms set up to supervise it. We don't want a simple truce.

"We did not refuse peace. We refused war because what we want is peace with security," he said in a news conference.

Dhlakama, evoking the Cold War origins of the conflict, said Russians, East Germans, North Koreans, as well as Zimbabweans, Tanzanians and Malawians had died in the fighting.

Repeating that he felt extremely moved that national reconciliation had finally been achieved, Dhlakama said he was prepared to accept defeat in democratic elections and would in such a case merely lead the political opposition.

Democracy

"I want to tell the people of Mozambique that if they vote for the president and Fretilmo, I will remain in Maputo as leader of the political opposition. This is what democracy means," he said.

The Rome accord commits Renamo and the government to wind up two years of negotiations in Rome on a peace accord within the next seven weeks. It also binds the government to enshrine in law the guarantees Renamo has been asking for. — Sapa-Reuters.