



Peace talks: mediators try to break continuing impasse

The peace talks between the Mozambican government and Renamo in Rome are once again deadlocked, with the head of the Renamo delegation, Raul Domingos, hinting that they will not be concluded by 1 October, the target date for a ceasefire. The main points of conflict are the same as they were before the face to face meeting in early August between President Joaquim Chissano and Renamo commander-in-chief Afonso Dhlakama. These are the future of the state intelligence and security service (SISE), and the number of troops to be recruited into the new national armed forces.

In the absence of any solution to these questions, which have been under discussion for more than two months, the Italian government and catholic church mediators have requested intervention at the highest level from both sides. They thus sent messages on 7 September to Mr Chissano and to the Renamo leader.

The coordinator of the mediating team, Italian government representative Mario Raffaelli confirmed this to AIM on 8 September. He said that the letters also contained a "proposed methodology" for the peace talks, which was "also supported by the observer countries and by the United Nations representative".

The mediators take the 1 October deadline, stipulated in the joint declaration signed by President Chissano and Dhlakama on 7 August, very seriously. Mr Raffaelli said that the purpose of writing to the two leaders was to ensure that the negotiations really could be concluded by 1 October. "We hope that from all the parties involved in this matter, there may arise convergent efforts in this same spirit", he said.

It is thought likely that the first part of September will see a fresh round of indirect contacts between Mr Chissano and the Renamo commander, with Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe acting as a middleman, in an

attempt to find a compromise as soon as possible. The major dispute is over SISE. Renamo had initially called for its total abolition, arguing against the need for any form of state intelligence service. It has modified its position slightly: now it accepts the principle of an intelligence service, but, as AIM understood it from talks in Rome, Renamo still wants to see SISE scrapped.

Proposals unpopular with Renamo

The atmosphere at the talks grew tense during the first days in September, particularly after a "fruitless" meeting on 29 August in which the two sides maintained their divergent positions quite unchanged.

This followed a series of meetings over the previous week between the two delegation heads, Raul Domingos and Transport Minister Armando Guebuza. Neither side is willing to make extensive statements to the press, on the grounds that it would be "imprudent" to allow public opinion to believe that the talks are at an impasse. "There's no more time for impasses which lead to breaks in the talks and reflections in our respective headquarters", Domingos told AIM. However, he immediately contradicted this by claiming that it would be unacceptable to advance with debate on the mediators' proposals for the

other points on the agenda - guarantees, and the process of the ceasefire itself - before reaching agreement on all the items under the heading "military questions". The government and the mediators had hoped to discuss all outstanding issues simultaneously, reaching agreement where possible, and delaying to the end those matters on which divergences remained.

When AIM asked whether this would not be the most appropriate way to proceed, Domingos came close to reneging on the commitment given by Dhlakama in August. He said that the deadline of 1 October was "a desirable target but not something which has to be reached at any price". The mediators see no reason why the talks cannot bypass the questions of size and the size of the army, leaving these for discussions at a higher level, and deal with what Mr Raffaelli describes as "the wide range of specific technical issues" which are not directly related to the most controversial questions, but which still need agreement. He gave as an example the method by which the United Nations is to intervene in supervising the transitional period between a ceasefire and general elections. There were "ongoing discussions" on this between Mr Chissano and UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali, said Mr Raffaelli, which had already resulted in an agreement in principle on the characteristics of UN participation.

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Dhlakama visits South Africa

Speaking at a press conference in Pretoria on 3 September, Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama also called into question the deadline of 1 October for signing a ceasefire in the Mozambican war, saying there were still differences to resolve in the negotiations with the government.

Talking at the start of his first openly acknowledged visit to South Africa, Dhlakama said the delegations at the negotiating table in Rome still had to solve the question of how large the Mozambican armed forces should be, as well as what he called "the dismantling of SNASP". Dhlakama once again betrayed his confusion with the political structures of the Mozambican state, SNASP (people's national security service) was abolished over a year ago.

Dhlakama insisted that these issues had to be resolved before any ceasefire. He said that Renamo wants peace and democracy "but not at any price", and that the military and security questions

must be agreed first.

Asked about the Mozambican constitution, Dhlakama once more conveyed his confusion over state affairs and claimed that it "is still Marxist and of a single party". Dhlakama claimed that at his meeting with Mr Chissano, the President had promised "to abolish anti-democratic laws". He said he "liked the meeting with Chissano very much".

Renamo and human rights

Dhlakama was asked what guarantees he could give in relation to human rights in Mozambique, since, said the reporter, the reputation of Renamo was similar to that of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, Dhlakama dismissed his organisation's unsavoury image as the result of "Frelimo propaganda".

But the latest detailed account of Renamo atrocities comes, not from any group linked with Frelimo, but from the respected US-based human rights organisation, Africa Watch, in their report, "Conspicuous Destruction".

Dhlakama also stressed the

"important role" that South Africa has played in Mozambique. Support for Renamo from at least some sections of the South African military has continued to the present, with the general staff of the Mozambican armed forces accusing the South Africans of being behind January's chemical attack on Mozambican troops who were trying to storm a Renamo base on the South African border.

Prior to the press conference Dhlakama met for about three hours with South African foreign Minister Roelof Botha, who opened the press conference expressing optimism that a ceasefire could be reached by 1 October, and that the dispute over the size of a new army could be resolved.

He claimed that the positions of both sides were "flexible", and stressed the importance of peace in Mozambique for the "economic unity" of the region. Botha laid particular emphasis on the role that the port of Maputo can play for the South African economy, since it is nearer to much of the Transvaal than any South African port. AIM-2:3/9/92