



## Assembly poised for ratification of peace protocols

A general peace agreement will "definitely" be signed between the government and Renamo on 1 October, Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano announced on September 23. "This is a fixed date, and the signing cannot be delayed", he declared at the opening of a session of the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic. Ratifying the agreements reached during the two years of peace talks is now the main issue on the Assembly's agenda.

President Chissano held a second Gaborone meeting with Renamo commander-in-chief Afonso Dhlakama on the afternoon of 18 September. The meeting was called to solve the problems that have deadlocked the discussions in Rome between government and Renamo delegations over Mozambique's future military and security arrangements.

Summarising the meeting with Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama, Mr Chissano said "we can now state that both on the part of the government and on the part of Renamo, there is a sincere will to bring the war to an end. That is why the Gaborone meeting ended by marking a definite date for the signing of the peace agreement". He said the signing would take place somewhere in Africa. The exact venue had not yet been finalised, but it would probably be either Zimbabwe or Botswana.

The Presidents of these two countries, Robert Mugabe and Ketumile Masire, did not mind which was chosen, and neither did the Mozambican government, said Mr Chissano. He added that immediately after that day's parliamentary session, he would contact Dhlakama "to continue the consultations to guarantee that the work our delegations are carrying out in Rome is on the right path".

The two delegations are now drawing up the final three protocols, on military

questions, on guarantees, and on the ceasefire mechanism itself.

With the main stumbling blocks resolved by the meeting, Mr Chissano did not envisage any further difficulty. Prior to Gaborone, Renamo had been demanding the abolition of the Mozambique intelligence service, SISE, a demand the government found completely unacceptable.

Mr Chissano told the Assembly he had explained to Dhlakama that "SISE is a totally different and new service, which is in line with the new constitution and a multi-party system". It was not just a change of name for SNASP (people's national security service), the paramilitary security body abolished in mid-1991.

Mr Chissano told Dhlakama that SISE "is a necessary service for the security not only of the country, but of all political parties, and indeed for the security of the leaders and members of Renamo itself".

He told the Assembly that he had offered Dhlakama "a formula for guarantees", in the shape of an independent commission that will verify and inspect SISE's behaviour to ensure that it is in conformity with the law, and does not violate citizens' rights.

This commission, he said, would not inspect every aspect of SISE's work "but just those that might be regarded as against the law, against the Rome

protocols, against the goals for which SISE was created".

As for the new armed forces, he said that the government had reduced its figure for the number of troops, and Renamo had increased its, to converge on 30,000 as "the minimum necessary for the defence of the country".

Mr Chissano stressed the importance of setting up the new armed forces quickly "so as to avoid what is happening now in Angola where, with just a week to go before elections, there are three armies in the country". "The suffering of our people has reached intolerable levels", declared the President. "The war must end at once so that the lives of Mozambicans return to normal and so that political change and decisions take place in a democratic framework". The Assembly will be in session when the peace agreement is signed on 1 October. This will allow the deputies to ratify it at once, so that the ceasefire may come formally into effect very quickly. In the last fortnight there were three face to face meetings between the two delegations which bore virtually no fruit. Both sides faced one common problem: how to dismantle their respective armies with a minimum of risk?

The government has the headache of how to ensure an adequate level of "sovereignty" during the transition from a ceasefire to general elections, and the Italian mediators have the difficulty of bringing the whole process to a dignified conclusion that assures them prestige.

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