

## Chissano and Chalker urge Renamo to respect agreements

Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano addressed the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, on 22 September, and said he had discussed the question of emergency relief with Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama at their meeting in Gaborone on 18 September.

The surest way to ensure that food could reach all those in need "would be for Dhlakama to accept the United Nations distribution plan, to accept at least the ten corridors chosen by the UN", said the President, "or better still to open all the roads that can be used". He then publicly gave orders to the country's armed forces not to try to take any military advantage from the distribution of food aid.

He said Dhlakama had told him that Renamo feared that the Mozambican army would follow food aid convoys, and would attack Renamo bases. "I told him our forces don't do that", said Mr Chissano. "We have no interest in using food aid to win military advantage. That would be cowardly on our part".

He then gave specific orders to the chief of staff of the armed forces, Lt-Gen Antonio Hama Thai, and to the Minister of the Interior, Col Manuel Antonio, both of whom are members of the Assembly, "to collaborate to the maximum with the donors and with the United Nations to save lives".

The armed forces and the police, he declared, should facilitate the transport of food aid, and should ensure that aid "is not stolen, and arrives where it is needed".

Dhlakama had told the President he wanted the government to support airlifts of food to Renamo-held areas, and said he thought the provincial authorities "were prohibiting the airlift of goods".

"I know that no such prohibition exists", said Mr Chissano. But, to show the government's good faith, he again gave public orders to all provincial officials "that there should be no impediments to any United Nations flights to any zone".

But the President pointed out that "the donors and the UN think that distribution by air is expensive and inefficient. You can't fit very much into a plane and it costs a great deal".

### Intransigence by Renamo

Renamo has been refusing to accept in its entirety the distribution plan drawn up by the UN-chaired committee on humanitarian assistance, which have envisaged the ten overland food aid routes, and eight air operations. UN officials urged Renamo to agree to the plan as a package, and warned that distribution would not start until Renamo did so.

The committee demanded that both belligerents reply to its "unified plan of action", specifying food aid routes, by no later than the 14 September, which the government did.

Renamo, however, delayed for 24 hours before responding. Loureco Macome, the Renamo official appointed to work with relief organisations, told AIM the night of the deadline that "we haven't replied to this plan yet. We are still carefully studying it". He promised, however, that Renamo, "will give a reply as soon as possible".

The plan of action reminds the two belligerents that they made a firm commitment in Rome "to open access for the international community to provide relief supplies to the most vulnerable communities".

The Mozambican government has repeatedly said that it has no objection to using any form of transport to reach people in danger of famine, regardless of whether they are living in government or in Renamo-held areas.

Renamo, however, has persistently tried to tie food aid for its areas to airlifts, which donors regard as the most expensive and least efficient way of moving food. The overland corridors that Renamo favours all start in neighbouring countries, whereas most of the food for Mozambique is landed at Mozambican ports.

The committee for humanitarian assistance had politely rejected Renamo's demands for large numbers of airlifts, pointing out that "air delivery to all the needy population is not possible, and can only be a short term, last resort measure".

It stressed that truck convoys to famine-threatened areas "must begin immediately to save the vulnerable populations".

### Proposed UN aid routes

The plan of action specifies ten roads to be used by these convoys. Four of these start from the Beira corridor, the road and railway between Beira and Zimbabwe. One goes from the rail station of Tica to the Renamo held area of Chiedeia in the southern part of Sofala province.

A second consists of the main road from Chimoio, capital of Manica province, to the government-held towns of Catandica and Guro. The third route also goes from Chimoio to Catandica, but then takes a secondary road to the district of Macossa, also held by the government. The fourth route starts at Inchope, which is the crossroads between the Beira corridor, and the Beira-Maputo highway. It goes down the road towards Maputo to the Renamo held area of Goonda. A further specified route starts from Buzi, just south of Beira, and heads southeastwards to the Renamo occupied area of Panja.

The other routes start from places on or near the Zimbabwean border. One heads out from Changara in Tete province, to the government-held small town of Mungari, before ending up in the Renamo strongholds of Buzua and Canxixe, in the northern parts of Manica and Sofala. Another goes from the border town of Espungabera, in Manica, through the Renamo area of Inhaucufere to the government-held town of Machaze. This road has not been used for many years, and may be impassable.

The final route goes from Mavue on the border to the government-held town of Massenvhaza province. From Massengena, two roads are suggested: one heads eastwards to Chigubo, and Dindiza which were recently recaptured by the army from Renamo. The second is a road known to be in extremely poor condition which meanders across Renamo occupied parts of northern Gaza before reaching Mapai, a town in the government held Limpopo corridor.

Renamo claims there are people living in these parts of Gaza in need of assistance, but the area has always been sparsely populated, and most of the residents have probably fled to the

Limpopo corridor or over the border.

In the Rome negotiations, Renamo had also wanted routes from Malawi and from South Africa. The committee had evidently turned these down.

Just four airlifts are envisaged in the plan - two to isolated government held towns (Machaze, and Chibabava), and two to Renamo areas (Magunde, in southern Sofala, and Canxixe).

Teams will also fly to make assessments as to whether full scale airlifts are necessary in four other areas, three under Renamo control (Buzua, the town of Inhaminga on the sabotaged Beira-Malawi railway, and Canda, in Gorongosa district), and one government zone, Casa Banana (which was Renamo's internal headquarters until its capture by Mozambican and Zimbabwean troops in 1985, and its conversion into a major accommodation centre for displaced people).

#### Renamo reject eight out of ten routes

On 16 September Renamo informed the United Nations office in Maputo that it would only accept two out of the ten proposed overland food aid distribution routes, and seven out of eight airlifts.

The two overland routes that Renamo accepted go from Tica, in the Beira corridor, to the Renamo held zone of Chiedeia, and from Espungabera, on the Zimbabwean border, through Renamo territory in Inhacufere to the isolated government held town of Machaze. The Espungabera-Machaze road has not been used for many years and needs substantial repair before trucks can travel along it. Mr Simkin, the coordinator of the UN system in Mozambique, said he did not know why Renamo had only accepted part of the plan. "They don't give any explanations", he said.

The UN then gave Renamo a further deadline. "We want a final answer on the entire plan from them by 20 September", said Mr Simkin. A Renamo spokesman in Lisbon, Fernando Vaz, was quoted by the Reuters news agency on 17 September as saying that the government wanted food aid distribution corridors to start inside Mozambique, while Renamo insisted they should start in neighbouring countries. Mr Simkin said that Vaz's statement reflected the

Renamo position prior to July, and "totally ignores the July Rome declaration between the government and Renamo".

On the 18 September a high-ranking United Nations official threatened that the world body will denounce Renamo as responsible for famine in the areas of Mozambique it controls if it did not accept the food aid distribution plan by the new deadline.

Interviewed by AIM on 16 September in the central Mozambican city of Chimoio, Wolfgang Scholtes, the UN's deputy resident representative in Mozambique, and the head of its emergency office, said, "we hope that Renamo will completely accept the plan by 19 September", he said. "If not, we shall tell the entire world that Renamo is responsible for the death of people in the regions that it controls".

Mr Scholtes condemned Renamo's repeated insistence that food should be taken to its areas by air, and that any overland corridors should begin in neighbouring countries. "It's impossible to supply the population through airlifts", he said. "The donors are not going to pay for the cost of these airlifts". As for the demands for overland aid to enter from neighbouring countries, Mr Scholtes pointed out that most of the food for Mozambique is landed at Mozambican ports.

Renamo's demands would mean "taking the food out of Mozambique in order to bring it back in again. This is completely impracticable. It's idiotic, crazy". (The distribution plan does make a concession to Renamo in that three entry points along the Zimbabwean border are envisaged.)

"People are already dying of hunger", Mr Scholtes said, "many die on the journey when they flee from Renamo-controlled zones. The situation of these people is extremely bad. Renamo can't feed them, and we don't have time to lose, so we shall continue to propose routes that start within Mozambique".

#### Chalker talks to Renamo

During a one day visit to Mozambique, on 20 September, the British Minister for overseas development, Baroness Lynda Chalker warned that Renamo, "is putting its own people at risk" through its refusal to

accept the United Nations sponsored food aid distribution plan.

Ms Chalker met both with President Joaquim Chissano and with Renamo's liaison officer for humanitarian aid, Lourenco Macome. At this juncture, Renamo was still claiming the UN food distribution routes were "under study".

At an airport press conference prior to her departure, Ms Chalker said she had tried to impress on Macome "how vital it is that we get agreement on implementation of the 16 July agreement".

She pointed out that the agreement covered food distribution throughout the country; this meant that Renamo had implicitly agreed to the opening of all roads.

"They agreed these routes two months ago", she said, "and now they don't implement them".

Ms Chalker did not hide her irritation with Renamo, and its obsession with airlifts. Macome "seemed to believe that everything should be delivered by air", she said. "I explained that meant spending money on air transport that should be spent on food and medicines, and that it is impossible to arrange airlifts to all the places where people are in need".

"By the end of the conversation he seemed to understand the need to use overland routes", she added.

She thought, however, that after the 18 September meeting in Gaborone between Mr Chissano and Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama, "There is a good chance that Renamo will agree to the plan. This is something Dhlakama now understands".

But with Renamo still stalling on the package of routes, Ms Chalker did not see how the United Nations could start distribution on the 21 September as originally planned. She warned that the UN "is running out of patience".

Ms Chalker said she had an "excellent" one and a half hour meeting with Mr Chissano, in which he informed her of the outcome of the Gaborone meeting. She was now "confident that the 1 October deadline for a ceasefire will be met".

She said she had also discussed with the President "the free and democratic electoral process that he wants to put in place as soon as possible.

During the afternoon, Ms Chalker

During the afternoon, Ms Chalker paid a brief visit to the drought-stricken Limpopo valley district of Chokwe, once the breadbasket of southern Mozambique, but now resembling a dustbowl.

She watched the distribution of some British donated maize near the Macarretane dam, which has now fallen to the lowest level since it was built 50 years ago, and drove alongside irrigation channels that are either completely dry, or contain just a few puddles.

Britain has donated 14 million pounds (about 25 million US dollars) so far for drought relief in Mozambique. Ms Chalker warned that, even if a peace agreement is signed by 1 October, "the food situation will remain critical for many months ahead". "Larger efforts are needed to prevent anything like a repetition of Somalia", she said. "The British Government shall be ready to