

Rebel leader in Rome after talks with Pik

THE on-off Mozambican peace agreement appears to be on again.

Renamo leader Mr Afonso Dhlakama yesterday left Mozambique for Rome to sign a pact ending 16 years of civil war, the Italian foreign ministry announced.

Mr Dhlakama, who had at the last minute expressed "strong reservations" about the accords due for signature today, was apparently persuaded to go to Italy following talks with South African Foreign Minister Mr Pik Botha on Tuesday night.

Foreign Affairs sources in Pretoria were confident that the peace deal designed to end 16 years of civil war in Mozambique would still be signed this week, "even if it involves a few more days of talks in Rome".

Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano is already in Rome.

Mr Botha left South Africa last night to attend the signing ceremony as an observer.

In view of Mr Dhlakama's reported hesitation, the Italian government had "suspended" invitations to other dignitaries invited for the ceremony, though President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe had already arrived in Rome.

The State President's office said Mr Chissano wanted Mr De Klerk himself to go to the signing ceremony, but he could not make it at short notice.

— Political Correspondent, Sapa-AFP