

MOZAMBIQUE

Stalemate as Renamo leader sits tight and government fights off UN

MAPUTO/Mozambique's peace process is stalled as Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama refuses to come to the capital city and the government fights with the UN.

Some difficult meetings are expected in the next two weeks, but even if the process is re-started, the election due in October will surely be delayed. The ceasefire, however, continues to hold and there have been no incidents for six weeks. But Renamo refuses to allow the government access to areas it controls, even though the peace accord guarantees free movement throughout Mozambique. Health workers and food distribution teams have been barred. In some areas Renamo is preventing people under its control from travelling to government zones.

Renamo foreign secretary Jose de Castro said that the peace accord divided Mozambique into two independently governed zones. This correspondent was told that as a journalist he needed a visa to enter Mozambique, and similarly, he needed special permission to enter Renamo zones. Both the government and UN Special Representative Aldo Ajello reject this interpretation.

"Renamo does not understand the peace agreement," Ajello said.

Mozambique's President Joaquim Chissano and Ajello both publicly predicted Dhlakama would come to Maputo in the last week of 1992, but he did not arrive.

Three weeks ago Dhlakama accepted the former Yugoslav embassy as his own house, but now says he will not go to Maputo until his staff has proper housing as effectively promised in an agreement reached in with the government in Rome last March.

Housing is an issue partly because Renamo demands a status in Maputo equal to Frelimo.

But diplomatic sources say that in contrast to Jonas Savimbi in Angola, Dhlakama accepts that he will not win the forthcoming election and will not move into the presidential palace. But he sees himself a political leader who will eventually be elected.

Thus he wants a house grand enough to serve as his base as leader of the opposition.

Dhlakama refuses to delegate power, and little can be done to break the deadlock until he moves to Maputo.

Meanwhile, the role of the UN has become controversial. In an attempt to avoid another fiasco like that in Angola, the UN Security Council on December 16 approved a \$331 million operation for Mozambique.

It will be called Onumuz (even though this is not an acronym in either English or Portuguese), will involve at least

8,000 people and is intended to be much larger than the UN operation in Angola.

But the government says the operation is too big and was designed without consultation. It says the UN is mounting a peace-keeping operation similar to Somalia or Yugoslavia, when the peace accord only calls on the UN to be observers.

Frelimo fears an Italian takeover. Italy mediated the agreement with Renamo, hosted a donors' conference last month, and will dominate a committee controlling aid flows.

It seems not accidental that UN representative Ajello is a former Italian Socialist MP. Although he resigned ten years ago in protest to government corruption there, he retains close links with the Italian Socialist Party.

After gaining Security Council agreement for his plan, Ajello flew to Rome and used his political contacts to arrange an Italian battalion of 1,200 soldiers to guard the Beira corridor in place of Zimbabwean troops who must withdraw under the peace accord.

Mozambique government sources say Ajello never discussed the plan with them. They say Zimbabwean withdrawal is linked to other parts of the peace accord which Renamo has not yet carried out, including the concentration of its guerrillas in UN-controlled assembly points.

Just before Christmas, Ajello told the government that an advance party of 13 Italian officers was already in the air in a military plane flying to Beira.

The government refused it permission to land, and the plane had to return to Italy.

At the same time, a three-way UN-Renamo-government battle is preventing the removal of mines on roads, which is necessary to get food aid into Renamo zones.

In the Rome talks, Renamo failed in efforts to gain the right to negotiate independently with international agencies. But Renamo is unwilling to allow government observers into its area as part of tripartite teams to oversee de-mining. It arranged with the International Committee of the Red Cross to bring in the Lonrho-linked security firm DSL for de-mining, but this has not taken place because the government says it violates the accord. So some roads remain closed.

Both Renamo and Frelimo seem surprised at just how much they conceded during the Rome negotiations, and are trying to recoup some of those concessions now. In particular, the peace accord gives the UN more than simply a monitoring role, and a much bigger role than in Angola.

The UN is to "guarantee the implementation" of the peace agreement, and it chairs the three key commissions established by the accord. Furthermore, the UN controls humanitarian assistance. That makes it an actor, and not just an observer.

However, the accord does not give Ajello the authority to run the country.

Indeed, it says quite clearly, for example, that foreign troops (such as those for the Beira corridor) can only be brought in to Mozambique with the agreement of the Supervisory and Monitoring Commission.

Although Ajello chairs that commission, the government, Renamo, and six other countries are members and Ajello seems to have overstepped the bounds in acting unilaterally.

Intense tripartite meetings between Renamo, the government and the UN began after Christmas and will continue in an attempt to resolve the power struggle and break the stalemate.

The spectre overshadowing the whole process is Angola, and all participants repeat publicly that the mistakes of Angola cannot be repeated. All agree, in particular, that the election campaign cannot start until demobilisation and the creation of the new army is completed, and that will take more than the six months envisaged in the Rome accord.

And the delay in getting approval for Onumuz as well as foot-dragging in Mozambique means the timetable is already two months behind that agreed in Rome last October.

Thus it is widely expected that elections due in October 1993 will be postponed until April 1994, even if the peace process starts moving again. *[Own correspondent]*