

# Southern Africa News Features

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## NO FURTHER PRE-CONDITIONS FROM RENAMO

by David Martin in Maputo

Richard Edis, Britain's Ambassador to Mozambique, was visibly angry as he listened to yet another list of demands by the delegate of the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO), at the recent donors' conference here.

He hurriedly scribbled another sentence into the text of his prepared speech: "No further pre-conditions will be accepted." Those six words added emphasis to the underlying impatience already contained in his written speech.

The delays in implementing the Rome peace accord of 4 October last year had already cost the British taxpayer US\$1.6 million (£1 million), he said. This was as a result of keeping a military training facility open in neighbouring Zimbabwe which RENAMO had so far refused to send troops to.

"This is scarcely a good use of resources and my Government cannot pour money down the drain in this way for much longer." But, he went on, "No one can now claim that all the elements for implementation -- the arrival of the UN force, a resolution of the accommodation issue, a fund for political parties -- are not in place.

"It is therefore time to say `Chegam os atrasos! Agora vamos implementar o processo!'" (Enough delays. Let us implement the process). It was at this point that he added his new sentence.

Mr Edis mirrored the anger of all donors at the conference who had just listened to the RENAMO chief negotiator, Raul Domingos, enunciate a new list of demands as a pre-condition to RENAMO sending its forces to Assembly Points for disarming and demobilization.

These conditions included the delivery to RENAMO bases of new uniforms, "trousers, shirts, boots and socks, belts, helmets, blankets, rucksacks and eating utensils" as well as the establishment of professional training centres paid for by the international community.

Domingos also demanded that the international community provide "houses, offices, telephones, photocopying machines, faxes, office material, vehicles, food and all other resources necessary for the normal functioning of RENAMO's political activity throughout the country." Such assistance must be given free to an unspecified number of RENAMO "political and technical cadres."

In addition he demanded that the international community finance the travel of RENAMO leaders, RENAMO offices throughout the world and "open their doors and accept the presence and functioning of RENAMO representatives."

If the money was not forthcoming from the international community to finance all these demands then, Mr Domingos threatened, this would "undermine the process of peace and democratization in Mozambique with incalculable consequences for the Mozambican people."

While the donors' conference was taking place, the RENAMO leader, Afonso Dhlakama, was touring Europe seeking material and moral support. That the atrocities committed by his movement are still fresh in some people's minds was summed up in one Swedish newspaper which referred to RENAMO as the "Khmer Rouge of Africa."

Dhlakama was often asked whether RENAMO's continued demands were not part of their preparation to resume the war as UNITA had done in Angola when it lost the elections.

"I gave them my word that my men will never take up arms against the FRELIMO government," he said. Many people recalled that UNITA leader, Dr Jonas Savimbi, had said the same thing before losing last September's elections and resuming the war.

In the case of RENAMO, and despite the usual diplomatic language calling on "both sides" to implement the peace accord, the donors have clearly had enough.

When the UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Eliasson, who was also co-chairman, tried to close the donor conference with a bland statement glossing over the difficulties RENAMO is causing, Canada's Ambassador, Charles Bassett, intervened, calling the proposed statement "too upbeat".

To applause from other donors, Mr Bassett said that the proposed statement "does not reflect the sense of urgency as to how close we are to make or break point." Further delays, he warned, would cause donors to lose interest. The Mozambican government delegation applauded while RENAMO remained silent.

Mr Eliasson was forced to adjourn the meeting and rewrite his closing statement to reflect donor concerns, "That the delays are accumulating to the point that the momentum of the process could be lost." Donors, it now warned, were facing competing priorities for their funds.

If the conference achieved nothing else it sent a very clear message to RENAMO and to the UN that enough was enough, that the donors' patience had run out, and that funds committed to Mozambique would be re-directed elsewhere if there were any further delays.

Several donors spoke to Mr Domingos in private, plainly explaining the situation to him. He did not repeat his demands during his closing speech and two days later RENAMO accepted US\$10 million trust fund as donor support for its political activities rather than the US\$100 million he had recently demanded.

But, as far as RENAMO is concerned, whether enough is enough remains to be seen. In the recent months they have learned that each new demand elicits new concessions from those who believe it is the best way to keep the process on track.

Under the Rome accord, the Government undertook to "facilitate" RENAMO in obtaining installations and facilities as it tries to transform itself into a political force.

To date the government has supplied the RENAMO delegation in Maputo with 18 houses and flats (in a city where accommodation is virtually impossible to find and where there are many homeless), five saloon cars, 60 litres of fuel every three days and some US\$300,000, much of it for whisky.

Even so fresh demands continue to be made. Only a few days ago RENAMO demanded 15 houses on the northern Mozambique Island. Much of the demand for "suitable" housing has been tied to the supposed arrival in Maputo of Mr Dhlakama. But this has been an illusion. Last November the RENAMO General Council decided that Mr Dhlakama would not reside in Maputo until the election results were known.

Since then, RENAMO has continued to demand a "suitable" house for Mr Dhlakama. When houses have been offered they have been occupied by other RENAMO leaders and said to be "unsuitable" for Mr Dhlakama.

In the past donors have criticized the Mozambican government for not being flexible enough when confronted with new demands. Now that they themselves have been confronted with new demands they have bluntly replied that there can be no more concessions to RENAMO. (SARDC)

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