

Southern Africa News Features

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MOZAMBIQUE PEACE PROCESS LIMPS ON

By Richard Chidowore

One year after a peace accord was signed between the Mozambican government and rebel movement, the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR or Renamo), major strides still need to be taken to implement the agreement.

Although guns have fallen silent, Renamo has delayed the peace process, first by a deliberate three-month boycott of all the peace accord commissions, and then by making demobilization conditional on receiving new uniforms for its men. The rebels have also delayed the peace process by demanding the arrival of United Nations monitors to supervise the police and on arrangements for territorial administration.

Under the original peace accord timetable, both government and Renamo were supposed to start demobilization in December 1992.

But soldiers from both sides have still not moved into assembly points to be disarmed and demobilized or incorporated into a new national army. These and other key aspects of the 1992 Rome peace accord have to be firmly established before elections scheduled for next October can be held.

The government has indicated its readiness to assemble and demobilize its troops but Renamo is reluctant to do so except under new conditions not even part of the peace accord.

"Renamo has not fully co-operated in the process and has caused needless delays in the application of the agreement," the Mozambican government said in a paper circulated to the Commonwealth summit in Cyprus recently.

One of the most absurd suggestions made by Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama was that elections should be held before demobilization is complete. The proposal was flatly rejected by both the government and the UN.

"Renamo's behaviour is nothing more than a repeat behaviour displayed by Unita in Angola. The preservation of Renamo's army would intimidate the electorate under the threat of war," warned Labour Minister Teodato Hinguana.

As Mozambique celebrated the first anniversary of the peace accord in October, Dhlakama remained at his bush headquarters in Maringue where he threatened not to demobilize his troops until a UN police contingent arrives in the country, a condition that is not part of the peace accord.

Dhlakama has also tried to shift the blame for the delays onto the shoulders of western donors whom he accuses of not providing Renamo with funds they promised.

He confesses that he only signed the Rome accord because he had been promised money.

"Western countries pressed me to sign the peace accord pledging money to help our campaigns. We have not received any 11 months later," claimed Dhlakama at a Nairobi press conference in September.

There is, however, no truth in this claim. A UN-administered trust fund was set up to finance Renamo's transformation from a military movement into a political party with a target figure of US\$ 10 million.

Dhlakama's claim can only prove one thing – that he was bribed, particularly by the Italian authorities, to persuade him to sign the peace agreement.

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has warned that the international community might be forced to withdraw support from the country's peace process if the elections are not held by next October.

With about 7 000 personnel in place, the UN Operation in Mozambique (UNOMOZ) is costing about half a million US dollars a day. Foreign observers on Mozambique's peace-keeping committees issued a statement in September warning that their resources are "limited and exhaustible" and that their patience was running out.

There are fears that the UN might abandon the peace process if it continues to be deadlocked.

On his trip to Maputo recently the UN chief held meetings with Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano and the Renamo leader to try and establish a firm date for demobilization and to speed up the peace process.

"We were able to produce a breakthrough," said the optimistic Boutros-Ghali after talks with the two parties.

He had pressed for an agreement on the composition of a commission to supervise next October's elections. It was agreed that the 21-member commission would be made up of 10 government representatives, seven from Renamo, three from other opposition parties and an independent chairman.

Demobilization starts in January under the new timetable, which is expected to run parallel with the formation of the new unified army. By February demobilization is expected to be 25 percent complete, by March 50 percent, by April 75 percent, and by May 100 percent.

Voter registration material will be prepared in February, and registration brigades trained in March. Registration of voters is scheduled to take place from April to June and the election campaign to run from 1 September to 14 October.

But a lot will depend on Renamo's attitude towards the peace process.

Though Dhlakama finally travelled to Maputo for meeting with President Chissano in September, the meeting only proved the rebel leader's lack of commitment to peace.

Despite reaching agreement on a number of issues, including territorial administration with Chissano, Dhlakama later on announced that Renamo would not apply the Mozambican constitution in areas it controls.

Equally worrying to peace-starved Mozambicans is the fact that the rebels say they will not allow freedom of movement and free political activity in their zones and that investors have to apply to Renamo, and not the government, to invest in Renamo-held areas.

Dhlakama was again in an uncompromising mood on his arrival in Maputo on 16 November for talks with the government on the draft electoral law. He said he was sticking to his demands for radical changes to the draft electoral bill and that "the elections are not worth contesting" unless his demands are met.

Popular opinion in Maputo is that Renamo is unwilling to demobilize its army because it lacks a political base. It fears that once it disarms, it is finished as a military organization and will not have the clout to dictate the terms.

Demobilization will turn Renamo into a non-military political organization that will be forced "to sink or swim by persuasion" in debate and not by the bullet.

Boutros-Ghali's visit to Maputo should not be viewed in isolation. Although Mozambique was given as his reason for visiting southern Africa, he wanted to know "first hand" the current situation in Angola as well as South Africa. To achieve this he met with his representatives in Mozambique, Angola and South Africa together with South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha.

Political analysts view Ghali's meeting with his regional representatives and Pik Botha as linking the peace process in the region to South Africa's own peace initiatives. There cannot be total peace in Mozambique and Angola until South Africa, largely blamed for sponsoring wars in these countries, has a democratic government, they argue.

It is, however, hoped that South Africa's readmittance to the UN and the recent opening of diplomatic relations between Pretoria and Maputo will speed up the peace process in Mozambique. (SARDC)

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