

MOZAMBIQUE

Chissano makes first UK visit

President Chissano began a four-day official visit to the UK on 6 May — his first trip outside Africa since assuming office last October on the death of Samora Machel. He was accompanied by Foreign Affairs Minister Pascoal Mocumbi, Transport & Communications Minister Armando Guebuza and Co-operation Minister Jacinto Veloso.

The visit indicates the importance of the UK to developments in the region, Mozambican sources say, as well as the continuing good relations between the two governments, forged during Machel's 1983 visit. Chissano is scheduled to see Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on 7 May and will also meet Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs Sir Geoffrey Howe, Minister of State for the Armed Forces John Stanley, Overseas Development Minister Christopher Patten and Minister of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs Lynda Chalker.

As well as regional issues, talks are likely to centre on Mozambican requests for increased military assistance — the number of Mozambican officers now being trained in Zimbabwe is already being expanded — and on help for the transport sector. The UK has recently announced funds for the rehabilitation of Beira port and is known to be anxious to speed up work on opening up the Limpopo railway link to Zimbabwe, which it is already partly funding (see SOUTHERN AFRICA MONITOR).

Further assistance may also be sought for the estimated 4 million or more people now facing starvation as a result of food shortages and dislocation (AED 1:5:87; Africa's Week). The government's economic recovery programme will also be discussed, following the successful conclusion of talks with the IMF and World Bank. Commercial debt rescheduling could be discussed by the London Club in May, the official news agency AIM says, followed by a Paris Club meeting and a consultative group to pledge new funds in July (AED 14:3:87, page 2).

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