

# UK pledges \$47m for Maputo rail link

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**THE rapid rehabilitation of the vital Limpopo railway linking Zimbabwe directly with Maputo, Mozambique's biggest port, now seems virtually assured following the pledge of a further £15 million (more than \$47 million) by Britain.**

The announcement in Maputo on Saturday by visiting British foreign secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, brings the total given or pledged by six donors for the rehabilitation to more than \$210 million. This is not far short of what is needed to get SADCC's potentially most important lifeline to the sea fully operational.

It was reported last month that Maputo will be able to handle 8 million tonnes of cargo a year once equipped next year with lighted buoys which will allow the port to work round the clock. The associated port of Matola can handle another 4 million

tonnes a year.

The same report noted that Beira had a potential capacity of 3.5 million dry tonnes a year, plus another 1 million wet tonnes. The port was already handling 2.5 million dry tonnes and 1 million wet tonnes a year.

However, Maputo was handling just 1.8 million tonnes a year, with Zimbabwe supplying 700 000 tonnes and Swaziland another 400 000 tonnes.

With Beira approaching capacity the rehabilitation of the Limpopo line to full capacity is vital if the landlocked SADCC states are to switch more traffic from South African ports.

Increased use of Mozambican routes would not only help eliminate South Africa's stranglehold over regional transport routes, but would also cut costs; the lines to the east are shorter and cheaper. The depressed Mozambican economy would also benefit greatly from the extra handling and transport fees.

The rehabilitation of the line was carried out by workers of the National Railways of Zimbabwe protected by troops of the Zimbabwe National Army, he said.

A test run has already been made along the whole length of the 534 km-long line running from Chicualacuala to Maputo.