

No response from Govt on Mozambican visas

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MOZAMBIKAN authorities in Harare say they have not received a response from the Zimbabwe Government to a proposal made in 1988 for the waiving of visa requirements between the two countries.

This follows complaints by the Zimbabwean business community, particularly businessmen in Manicaland, that there should be no visa requirements between the two countries, as well as complaints in the delays encountered before visas are approved.

In the case of businessmen from Mutare, the complaint has been that they have to travel the 600-odd kilometres return trip to Harare to obtain a visa, and then the 200-kilometres return trip to Harare to obtain a visa, and then the 200-kilometre trip to Beira. Some have suggested that the Mozambicans set up an office in Mutare so that there is no need for them to travel to Harare and back before proceeding to Beira.

"It does not make sense that we have to travel a distance of 600km in order to undertake a journey of 200km," one Mutare businessman said this week.

"This is one of the reasons why trade has not really developed between the two countries. We appreciate that there are security considerations if

the border were to be opened for people to cross at will, but there should be a joint liaison of some sort between authorities of both countries to make an arrangement."

Another businessman said that the proposals for a Harare-Mutare-Beira air link would not be of much benefit if the problem of visas was not resolved.

While Mozambican authorities have in the past cited financial constraints as one of the reasons for their failure to establish a consulate in Mutare, the businessmen say that they, through organisations such as (CZI) and (ZNCC), would be willing to make contributions to the setting up of offices in the town.

Asked to comment this week, the Mozambican Ambassador in Harare, Mr Paulo Tembo, said that the problems involved were well-known to Zimbabwean businessmen, pointing out that his government's proposals for the waiving of visa requirements had not been responded to by the Zimbabwe government since 1988.

"There is nothing new we can talk about. I have the same problem with Mozambican businessmen in areas near to Zimbabwe but who have to fly all the way to Maputo to obtain visas.

"This is a problem which is

very clear and Zimbabwean businessmen, more than anybody else, should understand that with the present situation in Mozambique, it is not possible to set up a consulate in Mutare due to financial constraints. We have tried to explain that."

Mr Tembo said there were several issues to be sorted out before a consulate could be set up in Mutare, saying that he would rather the businessmen travelled all the way to Harare than rush to set up a post which would be beset with problems.

On the related question of the delays encountered at the Mozambican Embassy in Harare in the processing of visas, he said his government had its own rules and regulations pertaining to the granting of visas, and it followed these regulations before a visa was granted.

He said for anyone to speak of "delays" was an interference with this work and that of his officers, which he said he would not tolerate.

"My people in Maputo also have to wait. They do not get the visas in one day. If you are a government officer then we know that we can issue a visa the same day."

Mr Tembo also said in response to another question that he was unaware of any increase in illegal border crossings into Zimbabwe.