

WOMEN ON THE FRONT LINE

ECASAAMA

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Chair, Delegates and Friends

It is with deep emotion that we are meeting here, women and men from various parts of the world with the single and shared purpose of discussing the impact of external aggression on the People's Republic of Mozambique and the People's Republic of Angola.

Before making a general statement on the situation of Mozambican women and the problems arising from the situation of war and aggression in our country, allow me on behalf of every Mozambican woman and of the Mozambican Women's Organisation to congratulate you on your presence and the encouragement it gives us.

Chair, Delegates and Friends

The emancipation of the Mozambican woman is not yet complete and continues to warrant special attention by the Mozambican Women's Organisation and the Frelimo Party. Woman with the special place she has in the family structure as mother and wife is the great educator of new generations. We shall present in this discussion on the theme of Women in the Front Line the general situation of Mozambican women in the colonial period, their participation in the armed struggle for national liberation through the Women's Detachment, the great achievements by the Revolution and by women, women in the political, economic and social life of Mozambique, the situation caused by the war of aggression promoted by the racist regime of South Africa through armed bandits, women's participation in defence, the fight against armed banditry and in national reconstruction with the aim of overcoming the war and winning peace.

As an aid to understanding we shall provide a brief geographical description of the People's Republic of Mozambique, a developing country in southern Africa.

GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

Mozambique lies on the western side of the vast African continent, between the rivers Rovuma and Maputo (parallel 10 degrees 27 S) (parallel 26 degrees 52 S) and between the meridians 30 degrees 12 and 40 degrees 51 to the east of Greenwich, and has an area of 799,380 square kilometres (786,380 Sq Km of land and 13,000 Sq Km of domestic waters). It has a coastline of 2,470 kilometres on the Indian Ocean coast.

Its land frontiers, stretching 4,330 kilometres, are bounded on the north by Tanzania, on the east by Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa (Transvaal) and Swaziland and on the south by South Africa (Natal).

POPULATION DENSITY

The general population census held in 1980 recorded a population of 12,130,000 inhabitants. The population comprised 5,908,500 men and 6,221,500 women.

Currently despite the war of aggression by the racist regime of South Africa through armed bandits, the population estimate is about 14,932,400 inhabitants. Every four minutes the war robs us of a child.

The Mozambican Women's Organisation (OMM) is a mass democratic organisation, founded in 1973 when the national liberation armed struggle was still under way. OMM is guided by the Frelimo Party's political line and is rooted in the glorious traditions of people's war.

Any Mozambican woman may join, irrespective of race, ethnic origin, creed, educational level, social status, marital state and so on. Unity is a means by which the OMM is able to define common and clear objectives.

MOZAMBICAN WOMAN IN "TRADITIONAL" SOCIETY

Women in the "traditional" society had no clear role in making political decisions, were entirely controlled by men and spent their time under the tutelage of one of the older male members of the lineage to which they belonged.

However women had some important characteristics. They provided the labour force necessary for production and through their reproductive capacity gave birth to new workers and hence to new sources of wealth for the individual or group to whom they belonged.

The practice of "lobolo" or bride price governed control over woman's productive and reproductive capacity.

WOMAN IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD

In the colonial period, women like men suffered from the character of the regime. They were recruited for "chibalo" or forced labour.

Before the imposition of colonial domination, women, as we have indicated, had two main tasks - that of cultivating crops to feed the family and of bearing and rearing children. These tasks, as well as the duty of preparing the family's food and collecting firewood and water, took up all their time. The colonial regime added other duties, namely forced labour and obligatory production of cotton and rice - the traditional tasks remained unchanged.

In the colonial period one of the forms of oppression of woman was sexual exploitation by the colonialists.

On the other hand women were only permitted some kinds of employment, mainly in the cashew and clothing industries where they earned practically nothing.

## WOMEN IN THE ARMED STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION

The Mozambican woman as an exploited, humiliated and oppressed being, denied basic rights, prevented from participating in her country's political life, fulfilling only the tasks of production and reproduction and of the household, did not shrink from the Mozambican people's mass movement that led to the general insurrection of the armed struggle for national liberation against Portuguese colonialism.

On 25 June 1962 under the leadership of the first President of Frelimo, Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane, was founded the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), a movement involving all Mozambicans, irrespective of gender, race or religion, in the struggle against Portuguese colonialism that was launched on 25 September 1964.

The Women's Detachment was founded on 4 March 1967; here women from various provinces of our country received political and military training at Nachingwea in Tanzania. JOSINA MACHEL (the symbol of the Mozambican woman combatant) was in this group and was to die on 7 April 1971.

The principal task of Mozambican women at this point was to carry war material in support of the guerrilla fighters, organize creches for the children of fighters and for orphans, treat the sick and the war wounded, and to dig fields etc.

On 25 of June 1975 Independence was proclaimed and the Mozambican Republic established. In this phase OMM was implanted in all residential areas, factories, fields, farming and livestock cooperatives, and other sectors of activity.

This phase revealed great enthusiasm and massive adherence of women as they sought and hoped to play their part in rebuilding their liberated country.

## THE GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE REVOLUTION AND OF WOMEN

During the armed struggle FRELIMO began the process of eradicating all forms of exploitation and discrimination to which the Mozambican people had been subject. In the liberated areas the people could for the first time enjoy and develop political and civil rights.

Mozambican women, as an integral part of the Mozambican people but the most oppressed and socially discriminated against, warranted special attention on the part of FRELIMO which had made the effort to which women had responded by taking part in all the tasks demanded by the armed struggle and thus asserting the value of their contribution to society.

Hence many women who had always given their time to household duties or work on family plots began to be involved in other activities outside the home and play a more significant part in food production.

We have for example the massive role played by women in the cooperative movement especially around the cities of Maputo and Beira. In Maputo 61 per cent of the members of production cooperatives are women.

In Beira where most men are in wage labour, agriculture is mainly carried out by women, hence they provide the major labour force in the cooperatives.

Women are therefore striving to enter other areas of employment. However their low literacy levels are an impediment to their competitiveness in the labour market or opportunities for managerial posts.

Training has been undertaken to equip women for such positions and to raise their level of literacy. After independence the most oppressive laws that had discriminated against women were repealed. A judicial system was introduced in which women participated especially in neighbourhood and district courts.

Women began to be represented in the political decision making structure, as the following data show:

### Assemblies of the People

Locality Assembly	28%	of	members	are	women
Administrative Post Assembly	25%	"	"	"	"
District Assembly	24%	"	"	"	"
City Assembly	26%	"	"	"	"
Provincial Assembly	24%	"	"	"	"
People's Assembly -	16%	"	"	"	"

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Mozambique, the basic law, not only establishes equality of rights and duties for men and women but also enshrines Women's Emancipation as the duty of the state and society.

### AT PARTY LEVEL

Women provide 48,472 Party Members, or 30% of the total membership.

At the level of the Frelimo Party's Central Committee, of 130 Members of the Central Committee, 15 are women, or 11.5%. These matters are important and encouraging for women and hence for the society; for the first time women have had the opportunity to determine their destiny as subjects of history.

In the family the woman takes on a significant role as mother and instructor, balancing this key task with all the extra load of household work and her activity in the community as a worker in various spheres of production.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Mozambique guarantees women equal rights with men and imposes equal duties on them in all areas of political, economic and social life, with particular emphasis on the essential equality of women with men in the right to work, and within the right to equal work the right to equal pay.

Furthermore current laws contain important provisions to defend working women. An example: Decree 37/76 has provisions to protect maternity, and covers working women whatever the basis of employment or the length of service.

These are some instances of the significant changes in the circumstances of Mozambican women that stem from our Party's policy, that stem from the commitment shown by women in the struggle for dignity and personality that were so crushed under colonialism.

The Nationality Law was amended by Law No. 16/87 of 21 December 1987.

### WOMAN'S SOCIAL ROLE AS MOTHER AND INSTRUCTOR

Mozambican women play an active part in Mozambique's social fabric.

In the countryside where most men migrate in search of better living standards, and the family is left in the woman's charge,

the women as well as handling the tasks of growing food and caring for the home, take on social responsibilities in the family and in the community as a whole.

Within the family the woman attends meetings at school for the children in her care, and lectures at the health centre. It is the woman too who is the day-to-day representative of the family, in family visits, visits to the sick, at bereavements - the latter duty is one that in view of the mourning customs of Mozambican society takes up much of a woman's time.

In the towns women are usually employed, in the formal or informal sector, and in addition to paid work and household duties also fulfil various social functions.

In comparison with peasant women in the countryside, many women in the towns share some social functions with their husbands, school meetings for example. As for lectures at health centres, it is women who attend since they take their children for check-ups, for weight checks and for vaccination.

In the community at large women take part in various activities from political meetings to days of voluntary labour promoted by the political structures and mass democratic organisations at places of residence. These include harvesting the country's vital crops such as: coconut, maize, cotton and tea.

These activities are important economically as a contribution to matching the farming year, the harvesting of each crop, and reducing labour costs.

In the areas round the towns and in the rural areas, women play an active part in tasks of benefit to the community, such as supporting the local health service, spreading information on the timetables for mother and child care, supervision of the vaccination campaigns for children and expectant mothers..

It is the women who inform each other about protection of water supply from wells and thus participate in the struggle to prevent water-borne disease.

In some parts of the country women play an important social role in looking after children from the ages of two to six who have nobody to stay with them when their mothers are out at work but they do not have places in a kindergarten.

To solve this problem women from a particular neighbourhood will, for example, meet and so arrange it that one or two ladies, in a particular place - an empty house or factory yard - will look after a certain number of children while the mothers are at work, and the latter will pay a token sum in recompense for the lady who takes on the tasks. Normally the maximum number of children is 20 as this is the most that circumstances will permit. The same lady has to instruct the older children in school activities, such as singing, dancing, drawing, etc so that when the children do enter school they will have a modicum of understanding of what goes on in school.

Still in the social field one must highlight women's participation in the administration of justice as elected judges. All this is voluntary and part of woman's commitment to national reconstruction. The Dynamizing Groups, Frelimo's grass roots political structures, included in their internal structure a social affairs section whose role was to settle disagreements presented by the people. There is at least one woman in every social affairs section.

When after 1978 judges were elected, women were elected to these posts and one third of the judges at the neighbourhood level courts were women. In 1980 there were about 2000 elected judges in the People's Courts at the base, of whom about 800 were women.

Such participation by women in building up our judicial system, and the reintegration by the people of wrong-doers who take on new attitudes, was to be found not only at the base, but also in the People's Courts at district and provincial level. This made the judicial system in the People's Republic of Mozambique dynamic and human. It also contributed to the overall efforts in our country for the development of a people's democracy.

#### OMM IN THE TRAINING OF WOMEN

As a result of the discrimination caused by the negative aspects of traditional education and as a result particularly of colonial discrimination, education has been of vital concern to the Government of the People's Republic of Mozambique since national independence and is enshrined in the Constitution.

In the People's Republic of Mozambique work and education are rights and duties of every citizen, as a battle against the backwardness caused by colonialism, and the State promotes the conditions that will spread these rights to every citizen. The concern is manifest in the standardisation of education, in curriculum reform, to match them to the national reality, in teacher training, especially of primary school teachers, in reshaping and democratising education, in training student teachers and officials as supervisors of educational change. Education for all, but in particular for women, who were most discriminated against in society, has been one of Frelimo's essential concerns, since the armed struggle for national liberation.

We can note that as a result of this effort the percentage of girls in primary schooling rose between 1975 and 1980: from 33.9% in 1975 to 42.5% in 1980; then 43.9% in 1987 and 44.0% in 1986. In technical and professional training, general education, intermediate training, and courses at Eduardo Mondlane University, we note that the number of students rose from 1985 to the present.

The Mozambican Women's Organisation in conjunction with the Ministry of Education has been operating broadly in the spread of literacy. Literacy and adult education courses have been held at OMM centres, in agricultural and livestock cooperatives, in the green belt, so that women can produce and study at the same time. The OMM's National Centre for Cadre Training has had various women's training courses, of which we highlight:

- organisation and methods courses for leading cadres of OMM. Three courses of the kind have been held - 1986, 1987 and 1988 - with 33 participants in each course.

- integrated courses for literacy, mother and child care, nutrition, preventive medicine, etc. Three courses were held - 1986 to 1987 - with some 25 participants in each course.

- a seminar on food canning - 1987 - with 14 participants; another was due in 1988 with 25 participants (women are taught to can some foods for periods of scarcity).

- financial managements courses, for the management cadres of OMM productions centres; two have been held with 25 participants in each course.

## OMM'S WORK IN EDUCATING THE YOUNGER GENERATION

The OMM has held mass meetings, particularly in the urban areas, with talks on raising the status of women in the home and in the society, education and socialisation of children and youngsters in respect for other members of the family, and on parental role as the main educators.

The talks have aimed particularly at spiritual and moral support for engaged couples, and moral, civic, ethical and sexual enlightenment for the young.

## WOMEN IN FOOD PRODUCTION

Women play a vital role in food production. Farming is the principal occupation of women in Mozambique, and they are responsible for food production, whether for family subsistence or for sale in the market.

Data for 1988 show that out of 4,726,294 members of the family farming sector, 2,848,400 are women.

As women are aware of their key role in the fight against hunger, women in cooperatives play a dynamic part in collective production and often fulfil posts of management, administration, accounting in the cooperatives, while they also contribute to the family's income through the dividends they receive from the collective production.

In the family sector they produce food for the family to consume and a marketable surplus that enables them to buy essential consumer goods.

Local programmes have been implemented to raise standards of living and labour for the rural population with particular emphasis on water supply, irrigation, creches, mills, sources of power, and other investment to improve conditions for hundreds of thousands of peasant women.

## WOMEN IN NATIONAL DEFENCE

Owing to the war situation imposed on our country by the racist apartheid regime, the Mozambican people from the Rovuma to the Maputo are obliged to find ways of defending themselves, undergoing political and military training to be able to defend themselves, their family, village, factory, field, hospital, school etc - all these are the enemy's favourite targets.

The Mozambican Women's Organisation mobilises and encourages women to increase woman's role in national defence, in the battle against armed bandits and to enable our people to win peace, the indispensable precondition for prosperity. Hence many women are in the militia who are vigilant against bandit infiltration of our people.

We can be proud to say that in almost all the country from north to south and in all security and vigilance posts there are women serving in the people's militia.

## TO CONCLUDE

Friends and delegates

Peace as the prerequisite for welfare and progress is one of the aspirations of our people and of women in particular.

It is a hope and a dream we build from day to day and at many points of our immense land of Mozambique we must build with weapons in our hands.

There are numerous examples of Mozambican women's participation in the struggle for peace, in the struggle against armed bandits. Dear friends, once again we ask you to support ~~us~~ us on the diplomatic front, to support us in the reconstruction of our country laid waste by a war of aggression. We particularly ask for your friendship and solidarity in this struggle against the injustice of the South African apartheid regime.

Our displaced population need tools, especially farming implements such as hoes, machetes, ~~axes~~ etc.

We also need seeds, foodstuffs, medicines, health care, clothing, blankets, blouses, skirts, slacks, shirts, undershirts, shoes, boots, children's shorts, etc., and technical assistance for boreholes and the establishment of other improvements in our conditions.

A Luta Continua!

Maputo, December 1988