

7 AUGUST 1992

Leaders draw up peace plans for Mozambique

ROME.

THE Mozambican government and the MNR were late last night expected to agree on a timetable for achieving a full settlement to the 15-year conflict in Mozambique.

Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano, who met MNR leader Mr Afonso Dhlakama in Rome on Wednesday for their first direct peace talks, said negotiators were drawing up a calendar for a general ceasefire that could be signed at an African summit within the next few months.

A 16-member working group, composed of four representatives each from the government and MNR delegations, the Italian mediators and President Mugabe's Zimbabwean delegation, was asked to iron out a draft document on agreed principles to establish peace in Mozambique. The group met over Wednesday night and continued talks yesterday. A plenary session of delegation heads was expected later.

The drafting of the document followed what appeared to be a breakthrough in the peace talks on Wednesday night where both President Chissano and Mr Dhlakama agreed on fundamental principles that would end one of Africa's bloodiest conflicts.

President Chissano said in an interview yesterday that he had offered an immediate ceasefire to end 15 years of conflict, but this had been rejected by the MNR leader.

"I proposed an immediate cessation of hostilities. A truce is the wrong word as it implies a pause before the fighting resumes . . . but Mr Dhlakama rejected this," said Cde Chissano after the first formal five-hour meeting at Villa Madama, attended by President Mugabe, Botswana foreign minister Mr Gaositwe Chiepe and Italian and Catholic mediators.

President Chissano said Mr Dhlakama seemed to care more about making sure that any ceasefire should hold once it had been signed.

Mr Dhlakama had told him he doubted his MNR fighters in the field would obey orders to stop fighting at once in their drought-stricken country, where millions face starvation.

"I told him my armed forces were willing to stop immediately. I said my officers were ready . . . but he said his men were not prepared . . . and probably not disposed to obey.

"I told him that it was better to have a few viola-

tions of the ceasefire here and there, even if it involved clashes between entire battalions, rather than go on with generalised fighting and the systematic killing of innocent people," he said.

"It would be bad if we had to wait until the end of the year for this . . . I would like it much sooner," Cde Chissano said.

"Once we have agreement on satisfying the guarantees Renamo has asked for, there is no more reason to go on killing. There is no point in killing while we draw up a document."

Principles

After five hours of intense deliberations on Wednesday, following an all-night informal meeting hosted by Cde Mugabe, President Chissano and Mr Dhlakama agreed on fundamental principles for the draft agreement.

"We have agreed on the military, the police and a (future) constitution. We have also agreed on the role of a UN peace monitoring group. The government will take these protocols to the Mozambican parliament to give them (the protocols) more power to destroy all non-democratic laws," Mr Dhlakama said on Wednesday night.

The 16 negotiators who made up the working group which met throughout Wednesday night only broke off just after 10 am yesterday to brief Cde Chissano, Mr Dhlakama, Cde Mugabe and the Italian mediators on the contents of the draft document.

Foreign minister Cde Pascoal Mocumbi led the Mozambican government team, Mr Raoul Domingos led the MNR group, Father Mattheo Zuppi led the Italians, while the Minister of State for National Security, Cde Sydney Sekeramayi and the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Cde Emmerson Mnangagwa, formed part of the four-man Zimbabwe negotiating team.

Following the briefing from the negotiators, Cde Chissano, Mr Dhlakama, Cde Mugabe and the Italian mediators are scheduled to go into plenary session to discuss the draft document. A communique is expected at the end of the meeting. — Ziana.