

# Mozambican talks expected to begin in Rome today

ROME. PRESIDENT Mugabe and President Joaquim Chissano have arrived in Rome for the first direct peace talks between Cde Chissano and MNR leader Mr Afonso Dhlakama today.

Cde Mugabe, who flew in from London yesterday accompanied by the Minister of State for National Security, Cde Sydney Sekeramayi, and the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Cde Emmerson Mnangagwa, will observe the two-day face-to-face talks between Cde Chissano and Mr Dhlakama aimed at ending the 15 years of banditry in Mozambique.

The high-powered Mozambican delegations are already in Rome ready for their first direct peace talks brokered by Catholic Church and the Italian government.

Peace talks under the auspices of the Catholic Church have been held in a desultory fashion in Rome for the past two years.

On arrival in Rome, Cde Chissano said he hoped the talks starting

today would bring good results "so that we can have peace soon".

He said peace was needed to enable aid to be distributed throughout the drought-stricken country.

Mr Dhlakama has also expressed similar sentiments.

There is an atmosphere of optimism among both delegations that the meeting between Cde Chissano and Mr Dhlakama would lead to a complete and concrete ceasefire and an agreement on two particularly contentious issues — the future Mozambican constitution and the country's army.

The presence of President Mugabe at the historical landmark talks between Cde Chissano and Mr Dhlakama should add weight to the apparent common desire for peace by both sides.

President Mugabe, who has been instrumental in facilitating the meeting following direct but separate contacts with Cde Chissano and Mr Dhlakama is attending the talks as an observer, to-

gether with a representative from the Botswana government as well as Italian negotiators and other observers.

The meeting, the result of long and protracted diplomatic efforts by several Western and African leaders, including President Mugabe who is the current chairman of the Frontline States, is expected to signal the beginning of an end to the brutal and devastating banditry in Mozambique, in which more than one million people have been killed, another 4,5 million displaced internally and with another one-and-half million having been forced to seek refuge in neighbouring Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia and South Africa.

"There are big expectations from our people and we hope this meeting will lead us to a quick peace," Cde Chissano said on arrival in Rome.

In preparation for the scheduled peace talks between President Chissano and Mr Dhlakama, President Mugabe yesterday evening held a 45-minute-long private



Cde Joaquim Chissano



Mr Afonso Dhlakama

meeting with his Mozambican counterpart.

The meeting, which took place at Cde Mugabe's Rome Hotel, was the first of a string of three pre-peace talks consultations the President has had since he arrived. — Ziana.