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Government and Renamo declare cessation of hostilities

The Mozambican government and the opposition party Renamo on 24 August signed the final document declaring a cessation of hostilities throughout the country.

The original proposal that the declaration be signed by President Armando Guebuza and Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama was frustrated when Dhlakama refused to leave his base in the central district of Gorongosa. He told reporters that he would not travel to Maputo for fear of assassination.

The two leaders authorised the heads of the delegations to the long-running dialogue between the government and Renamo, Agriculture Minister Jose Pacheco and Renamo parliamentarian Saimone Macuiana, to sign the declaration.

No significant military operations have been reported since late June. For two months there have been no Renamo ambushes on the stretch of the main north-south road between the Save river and the small Sofala town of Muxungue, which previously had been highly dangerous. Not have there been any further clashes between government and Renamo forces in the Gorongosa area.

Speaking after the signing, Pacheco stated that the agreement would still be approved by President Guebuza and Dhlakama in a public ceremony in the near future.

Attached to the declaration of a cessation of hostilities are the three documents which the government and Renamo delegations approved on 11 August. The most important of these is a Memorandum of Understanding which envisages the integration of what it calls the “residual forces of Renamo” into the army and the police, and the collection of all their weapons, but gives no details.

Once these “residual forces” have been “integrated”, all their military equipment will be handed over to the defence and security forces. The memorandum declares that when these procedures are completed, “no political party should have residual armed forces”.

This “integration” and disarmament of Renamo is to be accompanied and monitored by the international observers, to be known by the acronym EMOCHM (International Observer Military Team for the Cessation of Military Hostilities). As agreed many months ago, the countries invited to send observers are Botswana, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Kenya, Cape Verde, Portugal, Italy, Britain and the United States

The Terms of Reference for EMOCHM state that there will be 23 foreign military observers, accompanied by 70 Mozambican officers, half from the government and half from Renamo. Their task will be “to observe, monitor and guarantee implementation of the cessation of military hostilities and the start of the subsequent phases, in the terms envisaged in the Memorandum of Understanding”.

EMOCHM will begin its work ten days after it has been formed – but there is not yet any firm date for the formation

of the mission. It will work for 135 days, but this period may be extended. This means that the two sides fully expect the work of the observers to last well beyond the general elections scheduled for 15 October.

The EMOCM Central Command will be based in Maputo, under a brigadier from Botswana, assisted by four colonels, a Zimbabwean, an Italian and two Mozambicans (one appointed by the government and one by Renamo).

The clauses on the “integration” and disarmament of the Renamo residual forces mention no numbers. There is nothing in the agreement about how many men Renamo has under arms, how many of them might join the army and police and how many will be demobilised.

Traffic returns to normal on Save – Muxungue road

Traffic between the Save River and Muxungue has now returned to normal, with the removal of the military escort system that had been in place for over a year.

According to Daniel Macuacua of the Sofala provincial police command, as of 27 August the military escorts had been removed. He said that motorists are now free to use the road at any time of day or night.

The end of the convoy system is clear evidence that the military and police believe that Renamo will respect the cessation of hostilities signed in Maputo on 24 August.

Journalists who visited the Save-Muxungue road testified that roadside activity was returning to normal. People who had abandoned homes near the road are beginning to return, and stalls and shops, closed for the past year, are reopening.

Those teachers, health workers and other state employees who had fled Muxungue and sought refuge in Beira or Inhambane are now coming back to their normal workplaces.

The 100 kilometres of road had been highly dangerous ever since the head of the Renamo information department, Jeronimo Malagueta, had held a press conference in mid-June 2013, threatening that Renamo would make it impossible for the road to be used.

The first ambushes on the road happened two days later, when trucks were attacked and two people were killed.

Following this, the convoy system was introduced. Vehicles were only allowed to use the road in convoys and under military escort. Two convoys a day were organised in each direction. Despite the escorts, the convoys still came under fire, and over the year the system was in force dozens of people, both soldiers and civilians, were killed and injured by Renamo gunmen.

Poll predicts MDM will overtake Renamo

An opinion poll undertaken by the Polytechnic University, Mozambique's largest privately owned institution of higher education, suggests that Renamo is no longer the main opposition force in the country, but has been overtaken by the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM).

The opinion poll covered a sample of 10,698 registered voters in five of the eleven provincial constituencies (Maputo City, Maputo Province, Tete, Zambezia and Nampula). Everywhere the poll found that the MDM is more popular than Renamo, sometimes by a very large margin.

In some of the cities, particularly among younger voters, the poll found that the MDM is more popular than the ruling Frelimo Party. Overall, however, Frelimo remains favourite to win the general elections scheduled for 15 October, because of its rural support.

Of the total sample, 47.5 per cent said they would vote for the Frelimo candidate, former defence minister Filipe Nyusi in the presidential election, 35.7 per cent would vote for the MDM leader and mayor of Beira, Daviz Simango, while only 10.9 per cent would vote for Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama.

Almost six per cent said they would vote for another candidate. But there are no other candidates – the poll was taken before the Constitutional Council, the highest body in matters of constitutional and electoral law, announced that only Nyusi, Simango and Dhlakama met all the legal criteria for presidential candidates.

Another problem, recurrent throughout the poll, is that we are not told how many of the interviewees refused to answer and how many said they had not made up their minds. The “don't knows” and “won't says” have been eliminated from the percentages.

But the poll tells us that 9,421 people answered the question. Since the sample was 10,698, there were 1,277 people who refused to answer or were indecisive – which is almost 12 per cent.

The same problem recurs throughout the poll. By eliminating the “don't knows” and “won't says”, the pollsters distort the results. In particular, they make the position of Nyusi and Frelimo look stronger than it may be. When looking at the rest of the figures in this article, it must always be remembered that a large slice of the sample declined to answer.

Asked which party they would vote for in the parliamentary election, 48.2 per cent of the sample favoured Frelimo, 36.1 per cent the MDM. 10.7 per cent Renamo and five per cent “others”.

When the figures are broken down by province, it can be seen that Simango and the MDM have made massive inroads into the once solid Frelimo majority in Maputo city. 46.3 per cent of the Maputo sample opted for Nyussi, against 45.3 per cent for Simango. Only 8.4 per cent said they would vote for Dhlakama. As for the parliamentary election in Maputo, 44.9 per cent said they would vote for Frelimo, 42.6 per cent for the MDM, 8.2 per cent for Renamo and 4.2 per cent for “others”.

Looking at the figures more closely, Simango leads in KaMpfumo, district in central Maputo, with 51.6 per cent, to 40.1 per cent for Simango and 8.4 per cent for Dhlakama.

Moving away from the centre of the city, the Nyusi share of the vote increases. In the KaMaxaquene municipal district, 47.2 per cent of the sample said they would vote for Nyusi, 44.1 per cent for Simango and 8.7 per cent for Dhlakama (but for the parliamentary election, the MDM enjoys a slight advantage – 45.1 per cent to Frelimo's 44.2 per cent).

On the rural outskirts of Maputo, Nyusi and Frelimo have a crushing advantage – in the KaTembe municipal district 71.9 per cent of the sample would vote for Nyusi, against 22.8 per cent for Simango and 5.3 per cent for Dhlakama.

These figures are in line with the results from the November municipal elections, in which the MDM did very well in the inner, wealthier parts of Maputo, but its support faded in the outer suburbs.

In cities governed by the MDM after the municipal elections, the MDM leads the poll. In Quelimane, capital of Zambezia province, 45.8 per cent of the sample would vote for the MDM, 38.8 per cent for Frelimo, 11 per cent for Renamo, and 4.4 per cent for others (the poll as released on 28 August did not contain percentages of the presidential candidates in Quelimane).

The position is even rosier for the MDM in Nampula city, where 50.4 per cent of the sample opted for Simango, against 37.2 per cent for Nyusi and 12.4 per cent for Dhlakama.

But in the districts of both Zambezia and Nampula, Frelimo enjoyed a comfortable lead. Taking Zambezia as a whole, 47.9 per cent of the sample chose Nyusi, 39.6 per cent Simango, and 12.5 per cent Dhlakama. In Nampula province, Nyusi led on 52.2 per cent, followed by Simango on 35.4 per cent, and Dhlakama with 12.3 per cent.

As for the other two provinces covered, in Tete Nyusi was the choice of 57.3 per cent of the sample. Simango had the support of 33.7 per cent, and Dhlakama nine per cent.

As for Maputo province, at first sight it looks like a crushing victory for Nyusi, with 65.1 per cent of the sample choosing him, followed by 24.1 per cent for Simango and 10.9 per cent for Dhlakama.

But the Maputo province sample is just 97 people from two rural districts (Namaacha and Moamba). Over half the population of the province lives in the city of Matola, which was not covered by the poll. In the municipal elections, the MDM made a very strong showing in Matola.

The pollsters admit that it is impossible to extrapolate from this poll to the entire country. Six provinces are missing, and four of them (Gaza, Inhambane, Cabo Delgado and Niassa) are generally regarded as Frelimo strongholds. Even in the provinces covered, only a couple of districts in each province were sampled.

There are also serious problems of methodology with the poll. Not only have the “don't knows” been set aside, but the sample is seriously skewed in terms of gender and education. 63.3 per cent of the sample were women, and only 36.7 per cent men.

13.5 per cent were university students, and a further 4.8 per cent had a degree. 37.7 per cent had mid-level education. Thus well educated people were vastly over-represented in the poll in comparison with their weight in the general population.

Frelimo and MDM launch election campaigns

Both the ruling Frelimo Party and the opposition Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM) on 31 August launched their election campaigns for the 15 October general election in the northern city of Nampula, capital of the largest of the 11 provincial constituencies.

Speaking at the Frelimo rally, President Armando Guebuza, in his capacity as president of Frelimo, laid a heavy stress on the need to strengthen national unity.

The country could only continue to develop, President Guebuza said, with the commitment “of each and every one of its citizens”. Permanent dialogue between the various

forces in society, he continued, was crucial so that Mozambicans can live together peacefully.

Frelimo's candidate to succeed Guebuza in the Presidency, former defence minister Filipe Nyusi, declared that he has "a programme of change and hope for Mozambicans", adding that, if he became President, he would bank on the development of agriculture, rather than on the country's mineral wealth.

"You can't eat coal and gas", he said. "The people don't eat mineral resources".

Nyusi said he had travelled round the country during the last six months listening to people, adding "my programme is the fruit of the discussions I have held".

Less than a kilometre away, the leader of the MDM and mayor of Beira, Daviz Simango, was also launching his presidential campaign.

At his initial rally, Simango declared "we want a nation of inclusion, a nation of development, a nation of freedom, a nation of justice and a nation of solidarity".

He said that after 39 years of independence Mozambicans remained poor, despite Frelimo's slogans of the fight against poverty. "They tell us stories of the fight against absolute poverty, but these stories are continuing to fail", he said. "What we see is a group of Mozambicans with absolute wealth. And that is why the country is what we know it as – increasing misery, our children sitting on the floor in schools, while every day timber is leaving Mozambique".

Simango called for greater independence of the courts in order to fight corruption, and for a reduction in the powers of the President to appoint key figures in the judiciary.

Like Nyusi, Simango too said he would prioritise agriculture, producing food to fight hunger. He also wanted to promote mass enrolment into technical and professional education "so that every Mozambican knows how to do something that can sustain his family".

He urged his supporters to turn out en masse on 15 October, to say "enough!" to what he regarded as 39 years of governance that had only brought "poverty and misery".

Ebola isolation ward opened

An isolation ward for any patient suffering from the lethal haemorrhagic fever Ebola is now ready and full equipped in Mavalane General Hospital in Maputo, according to a report in the daily "O Pais" on 1 September.

Health Minister Alexandre Manguela visited the ward on 29 August. It contains ten beds – five for women and five for men, plus an observation compartment with two beds.

So far no cases of Ebola have been diagnosed in Mozambique. "We want all of us to make joint efforts so that Ebola never reaches Mozambique", Manguela declared.

Health staff are checking on anyone who arrives in Mozambique from any of the west African countries suffering from the current Ebola outbreak (Guinea-Conakry, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and, most recently, Senegal).

Manguela said that last week ten people who had been in Guinea-Conakry arrived at the international airport in the northern Mozambican city of Pemba. "Our technical staff have been following them, and no case of Ebola has been reported", the Minister added.

These individuals will be followed for 21 days – the maximum period of incubation for the Ebola virus.

As of August 28, according to figures from the World Health Organisation, 3,062 people in West Africa had been diagnosed with the disease, of whom 1,552 had died. Liberia is the hardest hit country, with 694 known deaths, followed by Guinea with 430 and Sierra Leone with 422.

President Guebuza reopens textile factory

President Armando Guebuza declared on 29 August that the reopening of the Riopelle textile factory in Marracuene district, 30 kilometres north of Maputo, will dynamise economic and social activity in the district.

President Guebuza was speaking at the ceremony re-inaugurating the factory which had been paralysed for the past decade.

Riopelle has been acquired by the consortium Mozambique Cotton Manufacturers (MCM), formed by the Mozambican company Intelec holdings, and three Portuguese textile firms, Mundotextil, Mundifios and Crispim Abreu.

President Guebuza said that the investment made in reviving Riopelle "will result in the creation of more than 750 direct jobs by 2016. In this way it will contribute to dynamising the social and economic life of Marracuene, of Maputo province and of all our Mozambique".

The reopening of Riopelle, the President added, was part of the national struggle against poverty, and would encourage "an increase in the production, consumption and export of processed national products. It will promote the creation of agro-processing industries to make use of local resources in areas with agricultural potential".

The revival of the textile and clothing industry is based on using appropriate agro-ecological conditions to grow cotton, on a competitive labour force, on the availability of water and electricity, and on Mozambique's access to preferential markets. These include the United States, through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and the free trade area set up by the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The government hopes to expand cotton production, set up spinning and weaving industries, and establish new clothing factories producing for export, while the existing ones will be dedicated to serving the domestic market.

President Guebuza said that Riopelle "joins other undertakings which are expressing our programme to revive the textile sector, which is of great importance for creating jobs, and income for many Mozambican households".

The forecast that in the current marketing campaign 110,000 tonnes of raw cotton will be sold "is a clear sign that the availability of raw material is guaranteed for investors in this area", he added.

For the initial phase, MCM has purchased cotton from the company Joao Ferreira dos Santos, which will be transformed into thread and sold on the international market. In the second phase, MCM will add weaving.

Salimo Abdula, the chairperson of Intelec Holdings, said that MCM also wants to acquire the unfinished textile factory at Mocuba in the central province of Zambezia. The Mocuba factory was planned as the largest textile plant in southern Africa, and was being built with equipment from the then German Democratic Republic (GDR). But in the early 1980s the war of destabilisation made it impossible to move all the heavy machinery to Mocuba, and much of it rusted on the dockside at the port of the provincial capital, Quelimane.

The Minister of Industry and Trade, Armando Inroga, hoped that the resumption of production at Riopelle would prove to be one stage on the journey to replace imported second hand clothes with clothing produced by Mozambican industries.

This is a condensed version of the AIM daily news service – for details contact pfaufvet@live.com

President inaugurates gas fired power station

President Armando Guebuza on 28 August inaugurated a gas-fired power station, at Ressano Garcia, on the border with South Africa, which will eventually generate 180 megawatts.

The gas comes from the Pande and Temane gas fields in Inhambane province. The gas is treated at Temane by the South African petro-chemical giant SASOL, and then taken by a 614 kilometre long pipeline to the South African border.

Most of the gas is exported to SASOL's chemical plants in the South African city of Secunda, but Mozambique's share of the gas is increasingly being used by industries in the city of Matola, and to generate electricity.

The first stone for the Ressano Garcia power station (CTRG) was laid in 2013. The total investment is US\$250 million, and when fully operational, it will have 18 gas turbines, capable of generating 180 megawatts. Currently six turbines are installed, and the rest will be added one by one.

CTRG is 51 per cent owned by public owned electricity company EDM with the rest owned by SASOL.

The president stressed the key role played by Mozambique in meeting the energy needs of the SADC (Southern African Development Community) region. "We possess energy resources", he said. "We shall continue to share our resources with the peoples of SADC for the benefit of the development of the country and of the region".

This is the second gas-fired power station at Ressano Garcia. The first belongs to the Scottish based company Aggreko, with a total generating capacity of 232 megawatts. The Aggreko power is sold to EDM and to the South African and Namibian power utilities, Eskom and NamPower.

Aggreko specializes in temporary power solutions, and so its Ressano Garcia plant will eventually be dismantled.

Energy Minister Salvador Namburete told reporters he expected CTRG to be supplying power for southern Mozambique for at least the next 25 years.

EDM Chairperson Augusto de Sousa Fernando said that the 180 megawatts generated by CTRG is 23 per cent of the total energy consumed in the country, and 42 per cent of the amount consumed in the southern region (excluding the MOZAL aluminium smelter).

In recent years Maputo city and province have been running an energy deficit of 150 megawatts, which has forced EDM to import more power from South Africa, at a heavy cost. CTRG should eliminate that deficit.

Fernando said that by far the cheapest energy EDM purchases comes from the Cahora Bassa dam on the Zambezi. EDM pays the dam operating company, HCB, 1,080 meticaís (US\$35.4) per megawatt/hour.

Power from Aggreko costs EDM more than four times that sum – at 4,500 meticaís per megawatt/hour – while imports from Eskom cost 7,500 meticaís per megawatt/hour. The imports from South Africa have been costing EDM US\$26 million a year.

Power from CTRG will cost 3,000 meticaís per megawatt/hour, "and this will substantially reduce the amount we spend on buying power", said Fernando.

Chronic malnourishment affects 43 per cent of children

Chronic malnutrition affects 43 per cent of Mozambican children under the age of five, according to Deputy Minister for Women's Affairs and Social Welfare, Virgilio Mateus.

Speaking in Maputo on 7 August at the launch of a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report, Mateus said the figure, serious though it is, is an improvement on 2013, when 48 per cent of all children under five were suffering from chronic malnutrition.

He recognised that malnutrition is a threat to the survival and to the healthy development of children and that greater efforts are needed to improve the well-being of children.

The child mortality figures are also improving. In 2003, 153 out of every 1,000 children died before their fifth birthday. By 2011, this had fallen to 97 per 1,000 live births.

The UNICEF report warns of sharp regional disparities, pointing out that a child living in the northern provinces is twice as likely to suffer from chronic malnutrition as a child living in the south. There are seven provinces where the child mortality rate is still in excess of 100 per 1,000 live births. One of these (Gaza) is in the south, but the other six (Zambezia, Tete, Cabo Delgado, Manica, Sofala and Niassa) are in the north.

The worst province for children, according to the UNICEF study, is Zambezia, where not only chronic but also acute malnutrition is a serious problem. 9.4 per cent of children in Zambezia are acutely malnourished – the highest rate in the country. Zambezia also has the highest rate of child mortality (142 per 1,000 live births), the lowest rate of births in health units (28 per cent), and the lowest percentage of people drinking from safe water sources (26 per cent) while only 47 per cent of children in the province under one year of age have received all the basic vaccinations.

Contracts signed for two new dams

The Mozambican government on 22 August signed contracts with companies dominated by Mauritian capital for the construction of two dams on the Zambezi River at Lupata and Boroma, in Tete province.

The contracts were signed by Energy minister Salvador Namburete and Paulo Ratilal on behalf of the two consortia.

The Lupata dam will produce 210 megawatts, and is costed at US\$1.072 billion. The consortium that will build it, Hydroelectrica de Lupata, consists of Hydroparts Holding and Cazembe Holding of Mauritius, the publicly owned Mozambican electricity company, EDM, and the Mozambican company Sonipal.

As for the Boroma dam, this will produce 612 megawatts, and is estimated to cost US\$572 million to build. The partners in the Boroma consortium are Rutland Holding of Mauritius, EDM and Sonipal.

Construction begins in 2015, and is scheduled to take five years. It is forecast that 1,488 Mozambicans will be employed during the construction phase.

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