

West European MPs horrified by MNR banditry

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WESTERN Europe must help SADCC defend its people against Pretoria's terrorist aggression, European parliamentarians — some close to tears — said yesterday after visiting the victims of this aggression at Dondo near Beira.

The parliamentarians, led by the president of the Association of Western European Parliamentarians for Action Against Apartheid, Mr Jan Nico Scholten, heard reports of atrocities committed by the South African-backed MNR bandits — including the heart-rending story of one woman who had been forced by the bandits to cook, and then eat, her own child.

Two men with wide, frightened eyes and bedraggled clothes also told of how they had recently fled to Dondo to escape the terror they had suffered at the hands of the bandits. This had included being forced to carry their luggage, being robbed and seeing their wives raped by the bandits.

ATROCITIES

"People in Europe are just not aware of these beastly atrocities being perpetrated by the South African regime and its agents — and I must, and will, make them aware of it," said a shaken Mr Scholten, who clenched his fists in anger after hearing these stories, tears forming in his eyes.

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"We have to fight against the racist regime which is making all these people so unhappy — and that word (unhappy) does not express the situation in full."

Dondo, once a Zanla camp during Zimbabwe's liberation war, now houses 3 112 people who have fled MNR atrocities — and their blank, hopeless and broken expressions and furrowed brows are ample testimony to the misery they have seen.

Less dramatic, but just as important, was the parliamentarians' visit to the port of Beira, which the director of the Beira Port Authority, Cde Rui Fonseca, said was one of the five "freedom routes" in SADCC aimed at reducing dependence on South Africa.

Mr Scholten said it was obvious how important the Beira Corridor was for the development of the whole region. But, for security reasons, the railway link to Malawi, for example, could not be used. This highlighted the need for donor aid to increase SADCC's defence ca-

pabilities as well as building roads, railways and bridges.

"This is one of our deepest wishes after our conference and our visit here. Europe must also accept its responsibility to help you defend yourselves against the aggressive destabilisation policies of South Africa," he said.

The governor of Sofala province, Cde Francisco Masquil, said that apart from rehabilitating the Beira Corridor to take more regional traffic, attention was also being paid to the rehabilitation and development of the city.

ACHIEVED

In this, it was hoped to involve the private sector, especially in the provision of services, and the parliamentarians were shown the vast potential for the development of tourist facilities along Beira's beaches.

"Over the last two years we have achieved, despite some adversity, a qualitative change in the security situation here because of the hard work of the armed forces and of the people, who are determined to fight the armed bandits of South Africa," he said.