

Maputo~ Pretoria Talks

Even if Pretoria talks, it remains to be seen whether or not it will hold to its promises.

By Paul Fauvet

Unlike the previous encounters between Mozambique and South Africa, the meetings of January 16, held simultaneously in Pretoria and in Maputo, took place in a blaze of publicity. But the final communiqués were short and provided virtually no details of what had been discussed.

The Pretoria discussions dealt with security. The statement issued at their conclusion said that the two sides "had considered measures to be taken in order that the territory of neither state serve as a springboard for aggression and violent actions against the other."

Even fewer details of the Maputo talks on economic matters were released. A press release declared that the agenda "comprised questions relating to matters affecting transport, migrant labour, agriculture, fisheries, industry and commerce, finance, tourism and energy."

Frelimo political bureau member Jacinto Veloso laid down Mozambique's approach to the talks in a public opening session. He said that Mozambique interpreted the presence of the Pretoria delegation in Maputo as evidence "of the intention of the South African government to carry out actions to end the violence and escalating war."

Clearly, the whole process of what Veloso termed the "relationship" between the two countries centres on the security talks. One interpretation of the final communiqué would be that Mozambique has succeeded in wringing a pledge from the South Africans to restrain the Mozambican Movement of National Resistance (MNR), supported by Pretoria.

However, the main problem in any agreement on security will be ensuring that South Africa keeps any promise that it makes. Its past record does not inspire much hope in this regard. ▲▲▲