

SA-MOZAMBIQUE LABOUR

Working relationship

Negotiations between SA and Mozambique to conclude a labour agreement are continuing as normal — and could be concluded soon — despite other tensions between the countries over alleged violations of the Accord of Nkomati.

The talks involve the renegotiation of a labour agreement SA reached with Mozambique's former metropolitan authority, Portugal, in 1965 and have been taking place ever since the accord was signed last year. Two technical committees have been established to look into labour supply for mining and agriculture as these sectors employ the majority of Mozambicans working in SA. One spin-off of the proceedings so far has been that SA has agreed to temporarily legalise the position of between 10 000 and 15 000 eastern Transvaal contract farm-workers whose identity documents have expired.

Last year there were 60 400 Mozambicans registered as migrants in SA — employed primarily on the mines, with about 3 100 working in agriculture in the eastern Transvaal. This was significantly lower than the 150 000 Mozambican migrants working in SA in 1975 when recruitment from the former Portuguese colony peaked, but a definite increase on the 50 000 in 1978 after the Frelimo government came to power. (These figures do not include the many Mozambicans who are in SA illegally — and whose ranks are swelling as a result of the war with Renamo.)

Until now Mozambique — its economy battered by the combined effects of the war, drought and a devastating cyclone — has shown clear signs that it would like to see more of its citizens working in the Republic. Sheer economic hardship makes it unlikely that this stance will be changed.

SA Director General of Manpower Piet van der Merwe tells the *FM* he is "very confident" that a new labour agreement will be signed. A draft agreement has been drawn up and he expects officials from the two countries to meet again as soon as Mozambique indicates that it has finished studying the contents. "Our negotiations are proceeding in the normal way and have not been affected by the other developments," he says.

But whether or not Mozambique will get what it wants out of SA is another question



**Manpower's Van der Merwe ...
'charity begins at home'**

— although the diplomatic crisis of past weeks may force the authorities to make more concessions than they had originally planned.

Says Van der Merwe: "The numbers must be limited. Charity starts at home. Unemployment in SA is our first priority. But one has to recognise that our traditional ties with Mozambique are well established in the labour field — especially in the eastern Transvaal where people employ Mozambicans to assist them in peak times — and one must take cognisance of these practices." ■

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