

...F W de Klerk received a qualified endorsement for his reforms on Friday when he visited Mozambique as part of his ongoing effort to build bridges into black Africa. Mr De Klerk and President Joaquim Chissano held more than five hours of talks that focused on resolving Mozambique's 12-year war and improving economic and political co-operation between the two countries.

Mr De Klerk told a news conference afterwards that the South African government was abiding by a 1984 agreement that prohibited aid to the Mozambique National Resistance, the rebel group fighting President Chissano's leftist government. However, Mr De Klerk conceded that private assistance from South Africa may be reaching the rebels, who have devastated Mozambique's economy with their hit-and-run insurgency. 'I cannot give a categorical undertaking that nothing happens from private sources inside South Africa,' Mr De Klerk said. 'But I give the assurance that we are against that, and will take whatever reasonable steps we can (to stop the assistance.)'

President Chissano did not dispute De Klerk's statement, but contends that the rebels receive regular assistance from private groups in South Africa. Until the 1984 peace accord, South Africa openly supported the rebels. The war has claimed more than 500 000 lives and left about half of Mozambique's 15 million people in need of some level of food aid. Kenya has acted as an intermediary in periodic talks between the Mozambican government and the rebels, but there have been no breakthroughs and none is in sight.

President Chissano, meanwhile, acknowledged that Mr De Klerk has reduced racial tensions in South Africa since he assumed power in August. 'There are positive changes ... and we encourage all (anti-apartheid) groups fighting to take advantage of this,' President Chissano said. 'We want to see more changes to bring democratisation and a speedy dismantling of apartheid.'

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