

Mandela asks to meet rebel

Own Correspondent

MAPUTO. — President Nelson Mandela expressed his desire yesterday to meet Renamo leader Mr Afonso Dhlakama in spite of strenuous efforts by Mozambican government members to discourage such talks.

The meeting, due to take place today, hung in the balance last night although Mr Mandela was encouraged to go ahead by United Nations special representative Mr Aldo Ajello.

Mr Mandela told a news conference he would like to meet Mr Dhlakama but added he would only do so if Mr Dhlakama agreed and the Mozambican government gave the go-ahead.

The meeting may not take place as Mr Mandela may return to South Africa sooner than expected to meet Cosatu leaders if tensions rise over labour unrest.

Mr Mandela said the biggest poll problems appeared to be the demobilisation of armies and delays in the voter registration process. However, he was confident these problems could be overcome.

Asked if he would recommend that Mozambican parties negotiate a government of national unity agreement, he said he would not dictate how other countries should handle such matters.

Mr Mandela laid a wreath at the grave of former Mozambican president Samora Machel.