

Hopes of end to civil war as MNR talks

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HOPES of an early end to the civil war in Mozambique and the rapid recovery of the country's shattered economy were raised last night after confirmation by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Pik Botha, that a Mozambique National Resistance delegation was in Pretoria.

There was immediate speculation that full-scale peace talks between the MNR and Maputo were imminent — possibly in South Africa.

Mr Botha disclosed the MNR presence in reply to a question at a Press conference in Pretoria yesterday ... after talks with a Mozambique Government delegation led by the Minister of the Economy, General Jacinto Veloso.

Although it was unclear last night if the Mozambicans and the MNR had already met in Pretoria, it was implied in statements by Mr Botha that Mozambique had requested South Africa to act as a peacemaker.

The MNR delegation could not be traced yesterday, but it is understood to include senior representatives.

It is clear that a speedy end to the internal conflict in Mozambique is a key to the successful exploitation of the Nkomati Accord.

South African businessmen are obviously reluctant to invest in Mozambique while the situation is unstable.

In particular, the rail and road routes from the South African border to Maputo are not secure and MNR activity has prevented the resumption of electricity supplies to South Africa from Cahora Bassa.

Yesterday's talks between Gen Veloso and Mr Botha were the second this week.

It seems that after a meeting in Pretoria on Monday, Gen Veloso went home with

certain proposals which could have included South African-sponsored peace talks with the MNR.

It now seems clear that Mozambique realises the worsening civil war cannot be crushed militarily and hopes to end it through negotiations.

At yesterday's Press conference Gen Veloso said he was unaware of the MNR delegation in Pretoria and said he did not plan to meet with them. Mr Botha appeared surprised that journalists knew of the MNR presence.

However, he confirmed they were in Pretoria but declined to discuss the role the South African Government was playing in the situation.

"I have told you they are here and all I can say is South Africa will do nothing that does not accord with the letter and spirit of the Nkomati Accord.

"We will do nothing that will violate that accord and we will do nothing that will not be cleared beforehand with the Mozambique Government," he said.

When asked if the Government was acting as a 'middle man', Mr Botha said: "The South African Government will not interfere in the internal affairs of any other country.

"We will play no role which does not accord with the wishes of the governments that we recognise."

After yesterday's talks Gen Veloso and the Mozambique Minister of Security, Colonel Sergio Vieira, toured a Pretoria engineering works which specialises in the maintenance and restoration of diesel engines.

Mozambique is understood to have serious problems keeping its diesel-engined vehicles running.

Mr Botha said at the factory that the company had contacted him and expressed interest in doing business with Mozambique.