

PORTUGUESE FOREIGN MINISTER ON NEED FOR PEACE

Portugal's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Manuel Durão Barroso, while visiting South Africa, told AIM that peace in Mozambique is the top priority for the Portuguese government in its policy towards Southern Africa. Speaking in Pretoria on 11 June, Mr. Durão Barroso told AIM that he was more optimistic about peace than he had been a year earlier. The Portuguese Minister said that he believed that, after South Africa's participation in the agreement over Namibia, there was good cause to hope that the relations between South Africa and Mozambique would evolve towards stability and good neighbourliness. For the Portuguese government, he stressed, peace in Mozambique was the acid test for the good will and intentions of South Africa.

The Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that he had brought the same message from the Lisbon government to the Portuguese community (estimated at 600,000) living in South Africa: Portugal's priority was its relations with Mozambique. The Portuguese community in South Africa has a positive role to play in the economic reconstruction of Mozambique, and the Mozambican government shares this point of view, claimed Mr. Durão Barroso, citing his meeting with President Joaquim Chissano on a visit to Maputo in May. He also referred to his contacts with the "association of young Portuguese businessmen and professionals" in South Africa, whom the Portuguese government hoped could dynamise economic relations with Mozambique. This association has recently sent a delegation of 23 members to Mozambique, including representatives of some South African and multi-national companies interested in investing in the country.

On the Cahora Bassa Dam, in Mozambique's northwestern province of Tete, Mr. Durão Barroso said that all the parties involved (Mozambique, Portugal and South Africa) should respect the undertakings they have already given. Cahora Bassa, he said, was economically strategic, and was of interest for all of Southern Africa, and not merely South Africa and Mozambique. In this perspective he considered Cahora Bassa an important factor for peace. (The dam was built by the Portuguese in the last years of colonialism in order to sell massive quantities of cheap hydro-electricity to South Africa. It is still 80% owned by Portugal. No power, however, has been flowing south due to sabotage of the transmission lines by South Africa's MNR bandits. Repair of the lines is scheduled to take place this year.) He stressed that Cahora Bassa is of great economic importance to Portugal, which has lost enormous sums of money because of the sabotage. Mr. Durão Barroso said he would insist that South Africa keeps to the promises it has made as regards financing the repair of the power lines.

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