

Peace and development

By JOAQUIM ALBERTO CHISSANO

FORMER PRESIDENT OF MOZAMBIQUE

JOAQUIM CHISSANO was the second president of Mozambique. As President, Chissano successfully instituted a programme of deep socio-economic reforms and one of his greatest achievements was leading the negotiations that ended 16 years of destabilising civil war. In addition, Chissano has served in international organizations, such as his tenure as Chairman of the African Union from July 2003 to July 2004. Chissano chose not to run again for President in 2004 and established the Joaquim Chissano Foundation which promotes the principles of development, peace and stability.

I became President of Mozambique in 1986, with the country in a devastating war – backed by the Apartheid regime in South Africa – characterized by the massive killing of innocent civilians and the destruction of infrastructure.

Millions of Mozambicans were made refugees in the neighbouring countries, others were displaced within the country and entire families were killed or separated. No economic development strategy could succeed.

The politics of the country were characterized by a centrally planned system, with fixed prices in all markets and a predominant role for state enterprise.

Under these circumstances four pillars became intermediate priorities of my Government: the end of war, constitutional reforms, economic recovery and the end of Apartheid in South Africa.

Even under war we introduced the Economic Rehabilitation Program, in 1987, in an attempt to stimulate growth through the recovery of production and gradual realignment of the internal and external accounts of the country.

In 1989 I personally conducted a nationwide debate on the constitutional reforms. Surprisingly, a large majority of the people of Mozambique were against the country's introduction of a multi-party democracy. However, in recognition of the voices of minorities, a new constitution was adopted in 1990. The new Constitution established the multi-party system and a market economy, giving particular attention to productivity, market forces and initiatives of private economic agents.

Despite the great convulsions and the multiplicity of new experiences that we were going through, we did not need debates to conclude that the development of the country could only be possible with the end of war. The nation understood that peace was the safe and only foundation for the construction of a better future. So, the major task continued to be the end of war.

For this endeavour we intensified direct contacts and negotiations with the rebels. At the same time we started talks with several Mozambican sensibilities, inside and outside the country, including with those that we knew supported the disestablishing movement. Our aim was to bring all Mozambicans to the same track, the track that would take the country to peace, stability and development.

In October 4, 1992, the peace agreement was signed

in Rome. The agreement became a window of hope for the entire nation.

In order to implement the accord and deepen the fragile peace we immediately and simultaneously began – with the involvement of all Mozambicans and assistance of the international community – with three complex processes: the military process, the social process and the political process.

The military process aimed at establishing foundations for a solid and durable cease-fire. The soldiers, both from the Government and the rebel movement were moved to assembly areas established throughout the country. From here some were demobilized and others were voluntarily integrated in the new national army. The military staff of the new army were from both the Government and the rebel movement on a 50 per cent basis.

The social process consisted of social re-integration of the demobilized soldiers. Apart from the soldiers, the millions of Mozambican made refugees in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Swaziland and South Africa were warmly welcomed back home and resettled after a large operation with the involvement of all our citizens. Internally the challenge was to assure that millions of other displaced people should safely return to their homes and resume their productive activities for the development of the nation.

The political process comprised the preparation of the political environment for the elections. The rebel movement was transformed into a political party. Other political parties were created from within and outside the country. After a consultation with all these political forces the electoral bill was approved. In 1994 and 1999 we had our first and second presidential and legislative multi-party elections, won by myself and my party FRELIMO.

After the attainment of peace, economic recovery became our major challenge. With the involvement of the hard working Mozambicans we replaced schools, hospitals, road networks, bridges and other infrastructure destroyed during the war. We worked hard to boost our economy and the results were amazing.

Our objective was to bring down inflation, promote growth and create an enabling environment for foreign direct investment. We had some difficult circumstances such as massive floods in year 2000 and 2001. However, we have managed to keep on track, working hard to

promote the sustainable development of our country. As a result, Mozambique recorded one of the world's highest growth rates, averaging 8.1 per cent between 1993 and 2003.

Externally, we intensified our relationship with other nations in conflicts, trying to inspire them from our success story. That's how we have been involved in the peace process of Liberia, Burundi, Sao Tome and Principe, Comores, Guinea Bissau, Democratic Republic of Congo and other nations.

We also lent our experiences while chairing different multilateral organizations such as the African Union, the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) as well as the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

As Chairman of the newly established African Union we helped in creating its structure, particularly the Commission, Parliament, Economic, Social and Cultural Council, as well as the Defence and Security Council.

As SADC founding member, Mozambique has played a significant role in paving ways to promote peace, security, stability and development of Southern Africa. We were directly involved in the establishment of the SADC Organisation on Politics, Defence and Cooperation, through which Southern Africa prevents, manages and resolves conflicts.

Despite the fact that the Mozambican Constitution could allow me to run once again for the 2004 election, I voluntarily decided to step down. I announced my decision three years before the elections, to allow the country to prepare itself for a peaceful transition.

I took such a decision because I understood that I had played my role after more than forty years as a political leader. The time had arisen to allow a new generation of Mozambican leaders to take over and push the country ahead. Although I am no longer in the Government I continue to give my support to the social and economic development of the nation. Externally, I am still committed to peace and involved in the peace processes of countries such as Guinea Bissau and the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and Eastern Timor.

It is extremely important to always keep in mind that we can neither have development

without peace nor peace without development. Sustainable development can only be achieved in a peaceful environment. That peace must be rooted in a sound development process characterized by the betterment of the living conditions of the population. ■

