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Transcript

Mozambique's International Diplomatic and Trade Perspectives

HE Oldemiro Baloi

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HE Oldemiro Baloi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Mozambique:

Mr Alex Vines, Chairperson;

Your Excellencies;

My Lords;

Distinguished members of the audience;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured and pleased to have been invited today to address this august body, in this equally prestigious institution devoted to the study of international security and relations between states, following the good tradition of the Chatham House of debating and sharing views about Mozambique with such a distinguished audience.

It is indeed a privilege for me to be here for the first time and to speak on such an important theme: 'Mozambique's Diplomatic and Economic Perspectives'.

This important gathering represents for us a unique opportunity to interact with prominent personalities in order to develop a durable and mutual advantageous platform of views with different public and private institutions of this great country.

Reflecting on the Mozambique's diplomatic and economic perspectives today requires that first we cast back and review Mozambique's trajectory in contemporary times.

This is informed by the belief that without taking stock of the past, our interaction here today could become pointless and devoid of any meaning. Without a historical perspective, it would be very difficult for the new and future generations to build a balanced view and an objective appreciation of the efforts made by the Mozambican people to achieve the political, economic and social stage where the country finds itself today.

Mozambique has lately been experiencing healthy rates of economic growth, as a result of lasting peace and stability, increasing social and economic investment, wide ranging political and economic reforms, implementation of the strategic socio-economic plans of the Mozambican Government at national level, complemented by international bilateral and multilateral assistance, namely from the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth and other nations.

As a founding member of the Frontline States of Southern Africa, Mozambique played a pivotal role in the international process that brought about the independences of Namibia and Zimbabwe and led to the unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) and other nationalist movements in South Africa, in a process that culminated with the release of President Nelson Mandela, the dismantling of apartheid and the advent of majority rule in that country.

As you may recall, the Frontline States decided to create, in 1980, a regional economic organization to promote the economic freedom and integrated development to the peoples and countries of Southern Africa, known today as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the main objective of which is 'to improve the quality of life, freedom and social justice, peace and security of the peoples of Southern Africa.'

In the context of the current international environment, characterized by growing interdependence of states, globalization, regional integration and resurgence of emerging economies, Mozambique's foreign policy promotes the ideal of African unity and the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, in order to strengthen peace and sustainable development in Mozambique, Africa and the world as a whole.

Democracy in Mozambique

Since 1990 the country is guided by a new Constitution, which transformed it from a single party state into a multiparty democracy, based on the separation of powers and supremacy of the rule of law. This Constitution is a result of an inclusive and participatory debate that took place all over the country.

Two years after the adoption of the 1990 Constitution, and as a result also of an open and frank dialogue between Mozambicans, the Government and Renamo formally met in Rome and signed the General Peace Agreement on October, 4, 1992, which set the stage for the cessation of hostilities and transition to peace and stability that has prevailed to this day.

Since 1994, we have been holding regular presidential and legislative elections every five years. Furthermore, our multiparty democracy grew with the introduction of municipal elections already held in 43 municipalities. Last year, we held provincial elections for the first time to elect 10 Provincial Assemblies, which took place together with our 4th general elections held on the 28th of October, 2009.

Our democracy is being consolidated, therefore its laws and institutions are regularly revised to deepen and further strengthen the rule of law. In this context, our Parliament (Assembly of the Republic) is currently in the process of revising and updating our electoral laws, taking into account various national and international recommendations made after last year's general elections.

The Parliament will also revise the current Constitution (2004) to align it to the reality of a modernising state without changing any existing fundamental rights or the system of the government. The aim of this process is to define more clearly some clauses of our Fundamental Law dealing with separation of powers in the context of the socio-economic evolution taking place in the country. It will be a process that will follow the past experience in drafting the constitution. By this I mean that it will be an inclusive process, with the participation of all segments of our civil society. In brief, we are enjoying a lively multiparty democracy which goes hand and hand with the growth of our economy.

Economic Development

The political side of our development is also linked to economic reforms that are taking place in the country. A stable macroeconomic policy, combined with public sector and legal reforms, allowed us to focus our economic policy on the eradication of poverty, towards sustainable development, the main goals of our Government 5-Year Programme (2010-2014).

The implementation of pro-growth policies and emphasis on poverty eradication have enabled the Mozambican economy to grow over 7% in the last 10 years. This growth increase was accompanied by a substantial reduction in the levels of poverty, which declined from 70% in 1997 to 54% in 2008. At the same time, the progress brought about by investment in human development-sensitive areas, such as health and education, is illustrated by the increase in life expectancy from 42 to 49 years between 1997 and 2007 and the increase in enrolment and graduation rates at all levels of education. Also substantial investments, public and private, are being undertaken to upgrade the infrastructure throughout the country. This progress is also reflected in improvement in the international rankings of the country in different domains, also recognised in the Reports of the UNDP/Human Development, IMF, World Bank, just to mention a few.

In addition to the encouraging results that Mozambique has recorded in recent years, there are good prospects for future rates of growth. Among the

factors that may contribute to growth are the discovery of vast natural gas reserves, of possible oil reserves in the Rovuma River Basin in the North, the substantial coal mining projects in Tete Province, the development of hydropower general projects, such as the M'panda Nkuwa dam, downstream the Zambezi River, and the discovery of heavy mineral sands in Chibuto and other minerals in other parts of the country. The Mozambican Government is implementing strategies to enhance the best and sustainable use of these resources to the benefit and wellbeing of our people. To this end, Mozambique is committed to the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI).

All these socio-economic developments take place in close partnerships between the public and private sectors, Small and Medium Enterprises, particularly with the growing participation of our national entrepreneurs.

Foreign Policy and International Cooperation

The Government of Mozambique adopted in June this year, two major policy documents, namely the Foreign Policy, with its motto 'Making more friends, promoting more partnerships', as well as the International Cooperation Policy and its Implementation Strategy.

Both documents are now the main guidelines for the execution of the Government policies on foreign relations and international cooperation.

The fundamental principles of our foreign policy are summed up as the defence of our independence and sovereignty, the consolidation of national unity and strengthening of democracy and freedoms, upholding the ties of friendship and cooperation with all states, the observance of the norms of international law, the continuing policy of peace, the establishment of an equitable economic order in international relations, the affirmation of Mozambican identity abroad, the solidarity with the struggle of African peoples.

The objectives of our foreign policy can be summed up as follows:

- ensuring stability, security, territorial integrity;
- ensuring economic and social development of the country;
- strengthening the bonds of friendship and good relations of cooperation with all members of the international community;

- promoting the country's potential to attract more investments and partnerships for development;
- contribute to the effort of peace and international security;
- promotion of sustainable development;
- ensuring resource mobilization for the implementation of the government programs;
- promoting partnerships with the domestic private sector;
- participate in efforts to accelerate economic integration in the southern region of Africa;
- contribute to the solution of conflicts based on a negotiated process.

In implementing our foreign policy, Mozambique continues to believe in making friends and in the promotion of the culture of peace and dialogue in her diplomatic and economic activities, as well as in the establishment and renewal of partnerships around the world, taking into account the prevailing relations between the countries and the balance of power, the importance of a fair international order based on multilateralism, and also taking cognisance of the growing influence of emerging economies and the relevance of South-South relations in contemporary international relations.

The peacetime experience in Mozambique has been hailed internationally and as a result, we have been invited to use our experience and diplomatic skills to help solve intricate problems in different parts of the world. There are many examples of the contribution that Mozambique has made through international organizations such as the African Union and United Nations, and we can mention the cases of Sudan (Darfur), Northern Uganda, Burundi and East Timor.

Until last August, Mozambique had the honour of presiding over the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. Within this framework, we played our role of promoting peace and stability in Southern Africa, giving our contribution towards the settling of the political crises prevailing in Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Together with other SADC countries, we will continue to pursue the path of dialogue to bring about lasting peace and stability in our sub-region in order

to strengthen democracy and accelerate economic growth, as well as integrated development.

Mozambique, as the current Chair of the Association of African Portuguese Speaking Countries (PALOP), will also play her part in assisting the sister country of Guinea Bissau to normalise their political and economic situation in that part of Africa.

All these endeavours are an integral part of our commitment to peace, democracy and development in Africa through our regional and continental organization, namely the African Union.

As Mozambicans and Africans, we will spare no efforts to contribute for peace and progress in Africa and the world as a whole in the context of the execution of our foreign policy which as I said earlier is guided by the motto 'Making more friends, promoting more partnerships'.

Mozambique's Contribution to Global Issues

Mozambique is also playing her part in the global efforts to address issues such as fighting terrorism, organised crime, human and drug trafficking, and participating in trade and climate change negotiations.

Mozambique has a long coastline whose importance for economic development can never be overemphasized. This strategic location will be used in the respect of the international laws of the sea. Our ports and railways that serve landlocked countries of the region depend heavily on the activities and traffic in the Indian Ocean. The pristine beaches and islands full of splendour and beauty that dot our shoreline are important tourism attractions that we seek to explore to the full for the benefit of our development. The fishing industry that is important for significant part of our population is also reliant on the marine species that nature has bestowed our shores. Recent discoveries of hydrocarbon reserves confirm the great economic potential that lies beneath the ocean waters.

However, the long coastline also brings with it some threats that require huge investments in order to protect the environment and resources with which our portion of the Indian Ocean is endowed from plunder, as well as maintain our role as a conflict-free, safe passage for international trade of significant import to the entire world. In a nutshell, a peaceful Indian Ocean is critical for preserving peace in our territory and pursuing our national and regional development agenda with vigour. That is why we see the scaling up of piracy activities along the East Coast of Africa with great concern and we have

committed to play our part to neutralise this growing threat to international navigation in the Indian Ocean, namely in the framework of SADC and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) as well as with other foreign and interested partners.

International Partners

The successes that Mozambique has been able to score would not have been possible without the complementary contribution of the partners that support our national development efforts.

The key to this success has been the healthy relationship and mutual trust we have been able to develop, which resulted in the ability to align the international assistance with the priorities that the country has defined through the Government Programmes and Plans, including the imperative of meeting the Millennium Development Goals and building the institutional and material foundations for a sustainable future of Mozambique.

We commend the United Kingdom not only for the generous support that the country has provided to our development over the years, but also for the principled and leadership role it has played in driving the agenda for the establishment of genuine partnerships in the international stage.

We are committed to continue to work with key partners such as the United Kingdom in building on what we have achieved, as we chart the course of our future relationship which, I believe, will continue to be of mutual advantage, exemplary and a fruitful one.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With this address, we would like to reiterate that Mozambique is a peace-loving country that yearns for the development of her people and has a Government that is committed to international cooperation, multilateralism and partnerships to meet the multifaceted challenges that still confront our world.

We are committed to continuing to make our modest contribution towards a more peaceful and more prosperous Southern Africa, Africa and the world and to building strong bonds of cooperation among countries based on dialogue and the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, as a responsible member of the family of nations.

Mozambique will always do her part in supporting the international efforts that pursue a more secure and prosperous world in which the development

process also respects the need to use natural resources in a responsible and sustainable way in order to preserve the planet and its finite resources for future generations.

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to Chatham House for giving me this opportunity to share some insights about how Mozambique approaches her relations with the wider world.

I thank you very much for your kind attention.