

Speech by Dr Bernard Bot, NIMD President, 28 February 2008

Your Excellency Mr Guebuza, president of Mozambique, your excellencies Ministers of Mozambique and Ambassadors of Mozambique and The Netherlands, Distinguished Guests representing the Dutch political parties, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy to receive the Head of State of Mozambique. An official visit by a Head of State includes all kinds of meetings at the highest level, but the visit to an institute of Dutch political parties is not an automatic component of any official visit. We are therefore honoured that a visit to our institute was included as this gives us the opportunity to discuss issues of crucial importance: democracy and dialogue.

Mr President, in the awareness that you have been in touch with the NIMD at a previous occasion (at the time wearing the hat of the Secretary General of Frelimo) allow me to present very briefly the key characteristics of the NIMD.

*First of all, despite being funded primarily by the Dutch government we are not part of the government system. The seven political parties that have founded NIMD in the year 2000 have founded an institute that is in

close contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but which is autonomous in its approach.

*Secondly, our 17 country programmes are being implemented all over the world on the basis of ownership of the political parties in the countries concerned. While we have learned a few lessons of democratic functioning over the years and decades, we are aware of the diversity of democratic systems and are in no way inclined to export the Dutch system.

On the basis of the December 2004 elections you have become the president of your country, a country that has seen very substantial economic growth over the last years. The Mozambican electorate convincingly elected you and your party.

Many of us remember the state of your country at the end of the colonial era, with hardly any middle class and few trained professionals. In subsequent years your country has felt the impact of the global tensions between East and West, but also had to cope with the destabilising policies of the apartheid regime in South Africa. The civil war devastated large parts of your country. Against this background the progress since the 1992 General Peace Accord, in which you played a key role, has been impressive.

The link between the dynamic economic environment and the political dynamism is an area that needs further exploration. This kind of reflection would also need to review the events that have taken place in Kenya in the past two months. How to define the concept of stability if tensions in society can become manifest at times of elections? The exploration of the distinction between the roles of the state and of the governing party is yet another prominent area. How to define the separation of powers? Do European democracies and African democracies answer this question in the same way? Last year Kofi Annan stated that 'no nation is born a democracy'. The introduction of democratic systems requires a lot of time and effort, but after the introduction permanent maintenance is indispensable.

Many countries witness changes in governing parties every few years. Profound political changes have occurred in democratic countries as diverse as India, Ghana and Brazil, to name but a few. The Netherlands has also witnessed this phenomenon. My own party, the Christian Democrats, lost its position as a governing party in 1994, after decades of participation in governing coalitions. We came back in a government coalition after eight years in opposition. Since independence your

country has not experienced the alternation of power. We are curious to hear your views on this issue.

A few words on our programme in Mozambique. After the work undertaken in the period 1994-1999 in South Africa by our predecessor, The Netherlands Foundation for a New South Africa, your country was selected as the first NIMD programme country. Former South African President Mr Nelson Mandela recommended in 1999 that the Dutch political parties would continue their work to assist new democracies. A field office was established in Maputo and a series of activities started in 2001 to assist in improving the functioning of the Mozambican political parties. Similar to the approach that had been applied in South Africa inclusivity was the key characteristic of our programme design in Mozambique. In NIMD's thinking it is very risky for foreign organisations to show any inclination to support a portion of the political playing field. In Mozambique this implied support to both the party in government and to parties in opposition. It also included support to parties not-represented in parliament.

An external evaluation of the Mozambique programme in 2003 showed that the political parties appreciated the support they received. Trainings

and workshops assisted in strengthening parties and in increasing their planning capacities.

We hope that in this meeting we can jointly explore ways in which the evolution of the democratic system in Mozambique can create guarantees of inclusivity and dialogue. In what way can the creative thinking in the opposition parties be given an opportunity to broaden the views in Mozambican political society as a whole? What can we, the Dutch political parties and the NIMD, do to enhance the political dialogue in your country and to reduce the political tension between government and opposition?

Finally, prior to this meeting it was agreed to organise a closed session. The people present here should feel free to express themselves without being quoted by the press.

Mr President, the floor is yours.