

Heavy Debtor Brazil Pardons Mozambique Debt

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During the meeting yesterday between the presidents of Mozambique, Joaquim Alberto Chissano, and Brazil, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, an agreement was signed in which Brazil pardoned 95% of that country's debt.

A pardon for Mozambique's debt has been under study since the year 2000; the idea was agreed on by Lula during a visit there last year.

"It is not very much, but we are paying off a small part of the debt we have with the many free Africans who did so much work here in Brazil as slaves," said Lula.

Lula went on to say that Brasilia will push for boldness in its foreign policy with Africa.

"This is a step in that direction. We want stronger ties with Mozambique and all of Africa. We share history and language and we also have a historical debt with these nations," declared Lula.

Lula said he intends to make annual visits to parts of Africa in order to further strengthen the relationship.

Mozambique owes Brazil US\$ 331 million. The agreement signed on Tuesday by Lula writes off 95 percent—or US\$ 315 million—of that African nation debt. Mozambique's President Joaquim Chissano attended the signing ceremony in Brasília, Brazil's capital.

Lula said his move could serve as an example so other countries can do the same to other poor nations.

Brazil has one of the biggest foreign debts in the world: more than US\$ 200 billion.

Mozambique's President, Joaquim Chissano, said that Brazil's decision to pardon his country's debt has "a very important political meaning for the struggle by poor and less developed countries to correct the existing imbalances in the world globalization process."

Chissano sees President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's gesture as a "summons for other countries to settle the debts of less developed nations. For a new era to commence."

Today the Mozambican President paid an official visit to the National Congress and was received by Senate President José Sarney. Following the encounter, Chissano emphasized that debt relief will permit the implementation of other projects between Mozambique and Brazil, such as programs to combat Aids.

The Mozambican President observed that trade relations between the two countries should flourish in the spheres of agriculture, agro-industry, and mining.

For Chissano, the first step will be taken by the Vale do Rio Doce Company, which plans to get involved in the Mozambican mining sector. "It will be important to our cooperation, because it opens doors to other types of cooperation in big industry," he believes.

Chissano is visiting the country at President Lula's request and will remain in Brazil until Friday, September 3. His itinerary also includes the cities of Salvador and Porto Alegre.

Last December, the Brazilian Superior Court (Superior Tribunal de Justiça) (STJ), which is below the Supreme Court (STF), has donated 60 computers and 15 printers to courts in Cabo Verde, Mozambique and Guine Bissau as part of a cooperation and exchange program to provide assistance to judicial systems to members of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP).

According to the STF president, Nilson Naves, the donation is a Brazilian contribution to the modernization of brother-countries that share the same language. Naves explained that Brazil will also provide training for personnel.

The STJ program is being run in partnership with the Brazilian Foreign Ministry and the UN. Angola was the first country to implant a Brazilian computer system in its judicial system.