FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

PROTESTANT, CATHOLIC MOZAMBIAN CHURCH LEADERS, ON U.S. TOUR, TO SPEAK HERE

A seven-member delegation of Protestant and Roman Catholic church leaders from Mozambique will tour the United States Feb. 8-23 to give their first-hand account of the crisis in their country and to describe Mozambique's urgent need for emergency and development assistance.

The delegation, sent by the Christian Council of Mozambique, will meet with church and government officials in New York City and Washington, D.C. Delegation members also will speak in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Georgia, Kansas, Illinois and Michigan.

Their schedule in this area follows.

The church leaders' visit comes at a critical time for Mozambique, where 4.6 million people in a population of 14 million are at risk of starvation, and where war has taken 100,000 lives in the past three years and has displaced more than two million people.

This also is an important time in the development of United States' policy related to Mozambique. The Reagan Administration's support for the FRELIMO government has come under attack from conservative members of Congress, who are seeking support for the anti-government Mozambique National Resistance.

The United States is expected to provide about $15 million in development assistance through the private sector and $60 to $75 million in food and emergency assistance to Mozambique in 1988.

The church leaders' speaking tour is being coordinated by Church World Service, relief, development and refugee assistance division of the National Council of Churches, and by the NCC's Division of Overseas Ministries.

Church World Service has responded to Mozambicans' need for development and relief assistance by issuing an appeal for $1.5 million, for use by the Christian Council of Mozambique for emergency relief; health programs; training in health care, nutrition and farming, and support of agriculture and water supply development. CWS has worked with the Mozambican council for five years meeting emergency needs, forwarding more than $1.3 million in cash and material aid in 1987 for distribution in Mozambique and to assist Mozambican refugees in South Africa and Malawi.
Members of the Mozambican church leaders delegation are:

* Archbishop Alexandre Jose Maria Dos Santos, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Maputo, Mozambique.

* The Rev. Deolinda Lourinda Mabote, Secretary, Women's Society of the Christian Council of Mozambique, a Baptist.


* The Rev. Salvador Matsombe, Member, Senate of the Christian Council of Mozambique, a Baptist.

* The Rev. Osias Mucache, President, Christian Council of Mozambique, a Presbyterian.

* Anglican Bishop Denis Salamao Sengulane, Chairperson, Committee for Peace and Reconciliation, Christian Council of Mozambique.

* The Rev. Amos Baltazar Zitha, Member, Senate of the Christian Council of Mozambique, a Presbyterian.

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The Current Situation

**Hunger and war:** together they threaten Mozambique's national survival. One out of every four Mozambicans depends entirely on emergency food assistance. Yet, of an estimated 35,000 tons of grain needed per month, only 7,000 tons are available. Efforts to distribute food to rural areas are constantly disrupted by the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR), anti-government rebels backed by South Africa who destroy transport routes and attack emergency food convoys. 1.8 million refugees seek out overburdened relief centers, but many perish from hunger or in rebel attacks along the way. Another 550,000 Mozambicans have fled to neighboring countries. Over 100,000 people died as a direct result of the war in the last three years.

South Africa's Role

S.A.'s support for the MNR is a key element in its policy of regional economic destabilization. Mozambique, strategically located on the Indian Ocean, is crossed by three major rail lines and an oil pipeline which provide essential trade links for its landlocked neighbors, otherwise dependent on South Africa. In the words of the U.S. Ambassador to Mozambique, Melissa Wells, the MNR "wants to bring the country down by destroying it economically." A destroyed Mozambique would pose no further threat to regionally dominant South Africa.

United States Policy and Response

The U.S. recognizes the Mozambican government of President Chissano, providing $10 million in development aid and $75 million in emergency relief through the private sector. Private agencies are also responding, among them Church World Service, the relief and development arm of the National Council of Churches (NCC), which has issued a $1.5 million emergency appeal.

Conservative congressional opponents, however, seek U.S. support for the MNR and have restricted further aid until the U.S. President certifies that Mozambique has, among other things, talked with the Catholic Church regarding the return of church property and continued to reduce their number of Soviet and Eastern bloc advisors. These conditions, while certifiable, represent continued attempts to undermine existing U.S. policy.

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