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Transitional justice: A society at peace with its past is better able to build its future

During the National Conference on Transitional Justice in Mozambique, jointly organised by the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CDD) and the Ministry of Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs on 15 July 2026, His Excellency Nicolas Randin, Ambassador of Switzerland, stated that “a society at peace with its past is better able to build its future.”



This message reflects an essential dimension of transitional justice: the need to address the legacies of violence and human rights violations in order to build sustainable peace. Being at peace with the past does not mean forgetting, silencing suffering or imposing reconciliation. It means acknowledging the violations that occurred, listening to victims, preserving memory, promoting accountability and transforming the political, social and institutional conditions that enabled violence.

Transitional justice therefore seeks to rebuild trust between the State and its citizens, reaffirm the dignity of victims and strengthen the rule of law. The past should not be treated as a closed archive, but as a reality whose effects remain present in the lives of individuals, families and communities. Confronting it is essential to acknowledging suffering, repairing harm and preventing the recurrence of violations.

In his remarks, the Ambassador of Switzerland highlighted four fundamental pillars of transitional justice: the right to truth and information, the right to justice, the right to reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence. He also emphasised the importance of truth commissions as independent

mechanisms for establishing the facts, documenting violations, recognising victims and making recommendations on accountability and institutional reform.

For CDD, these four pillars are complementary and should be implemented in an integrated and victim-centred manner. Truth helps establish what happened, publicly acknowledge violations and preserve memory. Justice combats impunity and promotes accountability while respecting due process guarantees. Reparation seeks to address the harm suffered and, to the greatest extent possible, restore the dignity and rights of victims. Guarantees of non-recurrence require institutional reforms, public policies and oversight mechanisms capable of preventing further violations.

Any transitional justice process in Mozambique must ensure the meaningful participation of victims, affected communities, women, young people and historically marginalised groups. Reconciliation cannot be decreed or used as a substitute for truth, justice and reparation. It must emerge from an inclusive process grounded in the recognition of victims, accountability and the development of democratic institutions capable of protecting the human rights of all.

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