

## Towards a New Peace Process in Mozambique? Opportunities and Challenges of the Inclusive National Dialogue, one year on



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### Introduction

On March 5, 2025, after several months of post-election protests in Mozambique's main urban centres, the Political Commitment for an Inclusive National Dialogue was signed. Following the widespread irregularities observed in the 2024 general election and the shocking images of human rights violations during the post-election protests, this dialogue-based initiative was swiftly endorsed by the international community. However, the signing of this new accord met with some social scepticism. One year after the signing of the Political Commitment, the situation has seemingly "returned to normal"; yet it is still too early to foresee any specific outcomes from the ongoing Inclusive National Dialogue (IND) for sustainable peacebuilding and reconciliation. Whilst the desirability of a negotiated approach to address the 2024 post-election crisis is not questioned, the ability to design and implement meaningful reforms with sufficient consensus among key political actors and to secure social legitimacy before the next electoral cycle in 2028-2029 is widely uncertain. This article provides some context on the making of this new accord and analyses opportunities and challenges linked to the ongoing national dialogue initiative.

### The 2024 General Elections and the making of the 'newest' political crisis

Thirty years after the founding democratic elections of 1994, on October 9, 2024, Mozambican citizens voted for the seventh time in general elections. The official results gave victory to the new presidential candidate of the ruling FRELIMO Party, Daniel Chapo, with 65.17% of the votes, against 24.19% for Venâncio Mondlane, supported by the PODEMOS Party, followed by RENAMO's Ossufo Momade and MDM's Lutero Simango. These elections, as in 2019, gave FRELIMO a two-thirds majority in the national parliament and all ten provincial decentralised governments (CC, 2024).

A week after election day, presidential candidate Mondlane called for a national strike due to alleged irregularities in vote counting. Two days before the strike was due, on October 19th, Mondlane's lawyer and a senior PODEMOS cadre were shot dead in Maputo. Instead of the strike, Mondlane then called for a peaceful demonstration on October 21st. On that day, the police broke up Mondlane's press conference using rubber bullets and tear gas (DW, 2024). Mondlane fled to an unknown location and, through Facebook Lives, began calling for demonstrations demanding "electoral truth". In the weeks that followed, thousands of people in major urban centres, especially in the capital, Maputo, took to the streets to protest. Despite isolated incidents, the protests were largely peaceful and, through roadblocks, intermittently paralysed the capital and the country's main cities between the end of October 2024 and the end of January 2025. The state security forces, still under the presidency of FRELIMO's Filipe Nyusi, responded with

disproportionate force, killing and injuring protesters and bystanders ([Amnesty International, 2025](#)). Amid the growing tensions, the Constitutional Council (CC) partially altered the results previously announced by the National Electoral Commission (CNE), increasing the parliamentary representation of opposition parties. Yet, the CC validated the elections and proclaimed FRELIMO's victory on December 23rd, which led to intensified riots. Between October 2024 and March 2025, at least 411 people were killed, and more than 3,700 were injured, while there were more than 7,200 arbitrary arrests ([DECIDE, 2025](#)).

## Broadening the perspective. Conflicts, violence and peacebuilding in Mozambique

Since achieving independence in 1975, following a 10-year anticolonial armed struggle, Mozambique's recent history has been marked by several violent conflicts and peace processes, mainly between FRELIMO's government and the RENAMO party/former guerrilla. After the signing of the General Peace Accord in 1992, which ended 16 years of war, the country became an international 'success story' in peacebuilding. However, two decades later, the sound of guns returned. On this occasion, three peace mediation processes over six years were necessary to secure the signing of the Peace and National Reconciliation Accord on August 6, 2019. Despite the ongoing violent insurgency that erupted in late 2017 in the far north province of Cabo Delgado, this accord renewed hopes for peace, reconciliation, and more inclusive governance across the country. However, two months after the signing, the sixth general elections took place, and the most optimistic prospects linking peace and democracy began to fade with FRELIMO's landslide victory amid allegations of electoral irregularities, increasing polarisation and even some political violence events in the weeks leading up to election day ([Pitcher, 2020](#); [Rosário & Guambe, 2023](#); [Hanlon, 2024](#)).

Nevertheless, a distinctive feature of the 2024 post-electoral crisis, compared with previous events, was the overlap between a political elite-electoral conflict, which has been a recurring feature since 1999, and a broader wave of civil unrest. Although the 'bread riots' are not a new phenomenon in urban Mozambique, having already occurred in 2008, 2010 and 2012 ([Brito et al., 2018](#)), so far, they have been sporadic episodes of social unrest not linked to national politics. In 2024, however, Mondlane's charismatic leadership, through the effective use of digital platforms, managed to reach and mobilise a large crowd among urban youth living at the margins of the state, linking electoral fraud, police violence and the deterioration of urban living conditions under FRELIMO's governance.

## In Search of a Way Out. The 'Political Commitment for an Inclusive National Dialogue'

Almost one month into the protests, on November 26, 2024, acting President Nyusi invited the four presidential candidates to discuss the post-election crisis. In the absence of Mondlane (who refused to attend without safety guarantees or remote participation), the meeting failed to resolve the crisis. However, back-channel contacts among the party leaders of FRELIMO, PODEMOS, RENAMO and MDM began. Mondlane's position on continuing demonstrations (even after the CC validated the results) strained his alliance with the more negotiation-oriented PODEMOS leadership, leaving him sidelined from the emerging dialogue. On December 30th, President Nyusi met with the four national party leaders, including Nova Democracia, which has municipal-level representation, to discuss potential avenues to resolve the conflict.

While the opposition parties' leadership reaffirmed their rejection of the 2024 election results, they expressed openness to dialogue aimed at achieving reforms. With support from civil society organisations, the opposition parties drafted a joint set of terms of reference for the dialogue with FRELIMO's government. Following the January 15, 2025, presidential swearing-in of Daniel Chapo, the inter-party consultations continued amid protests in the streets. From then on, the negotiating parties decided to invite the leadership of the four additional political parties represented at the provincial level to the table.

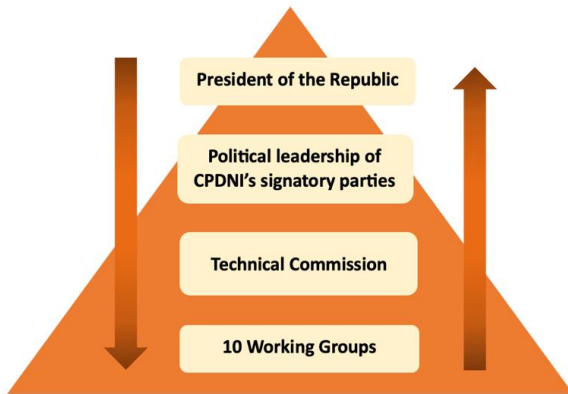
The negotiation process culminated in the signing on March 5th of the Political Commitment for an Inclusive National Dialogue, which aimed to establish "the principles and guidelines for an inclusive national dialogue with a view to reaching agreements on aspects of constitutional review and governance". The accord's content focused on a two-pillar agenda: 1) constitutional revision and 2) governance reforms. The first one included three areas: a) state reform, b) justice system reform, and c) electoral system reform. The second pillar covered a) tax reform; b) defence and security; c) public administration modernisation; d) natural resources management; e) reconciliation and national unity; and f) economic inclusion. The accord also included the commitment to grant a presidential pardon to certain citizens convicted in connection with the "2024 elections and the violent demonstrations" ([Law No. 1/2025](#)).

Regarding the process design structure, the Political Commitment states that the Inclusive National Dialogue (IND) was to be led by the President of the Republic, in coordination with the leaders of the signatory parties. Thus, the accord sets out a pyramidal decision-making structure: the President of the Republic (FRELIMO) is at the top; the 9 political leaders who negotiated and signed the accord are on the second level; below is a multi-party Technical Commission (COTE) of 21 members; and, finally, at the bottom are 10 thematic Working Groups, each with at least 10 members. Under this structure, the decision-making process will flow from top to bottom and back, with the final decision made at the top. After the Working Groups develop technical reform proposals, these are submitted to the higher-level body, the COTE, which serves as an initial political filter for negotiating and prioritising them. Within the COTE, decisions are taken by consensus, but in the event of disagreement, they will be taken by a three-quarters majority. Afterwards, the selected reform proposals move to the next level of the pyramid, where they are discussed by the leadership of the 9 signatory parties, who accompany the development of the national dialogue through quarterly monitoring meetings. Finally, the agreed-upon reforms are submitted to parliament for approval as law by the President of the Republic. As a guarantee, the accord provides for the possibility of requesting 'national observation', if necessary, by consensus among the signatory parties ([Presidential Decree No. 17/2025 & No. 146/2025](#)).

About timing, the IND is expected to last 2 years across 6 sequential phases, culminating in the submission of final agreements requiring legislative approval to parliament by April 2027 ([COTE, 2025](#)). After adoption in parliament, implementation is expected before the next cycle of the 2028 municipal and 2029 general elections. Finally, regarding funding and international support, the IND began operating with resources allocated from the national budget, using the previous Commission for Reflection on the Decentralised Governance Model as its reference. However, from the outset, it also relied on complementary financial and technical support from several international donors, including the European Union's Delegation, the Embassies of Sweden,

Ireland, and Germany, the Decentralised Cooperation of Catalonia and the United Nations Development Programme. After recognising Chapo's election despite the irregularities noted by the EU electoral observation mission (EEAS, 2024), international stakeholders, with

### Decision-making structure of the Inclusive National Dialogue



Source: the author, based on Law No. 1/2025, and Presidential Decree No. 17/2025.

varying degrees of optimism, regarded the IND as the 'only game in town' for achieving some reforms.

### The Inclusive National Dialogue, one year on

The first year of the IND has been characterised by the interplay between three processes.

Firstly, the institutionalisation of the national dialogue. Upon the parliamentary validation of the Political Commitment as law in May 2025, the COTE was established, and the signatory parties appointed 18 members. The COTE set-up process was completed by appointing the last 3 members selected from civil society proposals in early September. Consultants were hired as support staff to develop the terms of reference for the Working Groups, and around 100 members were subsequently appointed to serve on them. However, the central activity was the launch of a public consultation process to gather citizens' concerns and suggestions between September and November 2025 at several locations visited by COTE teams, both within and outside the country. This initiative has been billed as the backbone of the national dialogue; however, in its early stages, its methodology and organisation appeared somewhat improvised. Although the 'doors were always open', the lack of sufficient information available in advance — against the specific backdrop of the shrinking civic space trend in Mozambique — gave the impression of a highly top-down process in which ordinary citizens were not expected to participate of their own accord, but rather specific individuals and social groups were mobilised to attend the consultation events.

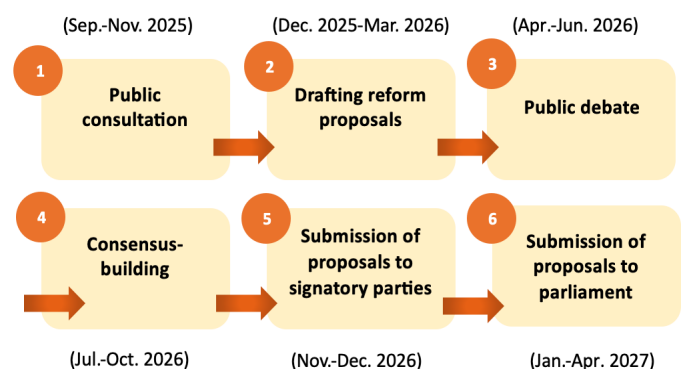
Secondly, the FRELIMO government's agenda under the Chapo presidency. Chapo's first year in office coincided with the 50th anniversary of independence, so he sought to capitalise on this historical date to try to mark a break with the past, linking his presidency to the dawn of a new epoch in the country. However, despite the new narrative and symbolic events, the country continued to face major structural challenges, along with post-election instability. The government's stance on seeking negotiated solutions to the 2024 political crisis has been somewhat enigmatic so far. Whilst President Chapo is officially leading the IND and a senior FRELIMO cadre chairs

the COTE, the ruling party has, from the outset, adopted a belligerent discourse that criminalises and delegitimises the post-election protests. In this regard, in December 2025, a presidential pardon was granted to more than 751 citizens in honour of Family Day, and in accordance with the Political Commitment's implementation. However, of the total beneficiaries, only 22 were related to the "2024 elections and the violent, illegal and criminal demonstrations" (Presidential Decree No. 49/2025). Moreover, in December 2025, the Government also passed a new decree regulating the monitoring of telecommunications traffic, which now allows for the legal blocking of the networks ('shutdown') on grounds of public safety and state security (Decree No. 48/2025). In March 2026, a new media law was adopted in parliament, establishing greater public control over media organisations - especially on digital platforms, and greater civil and criminal liability on journalists and limiting the work of international media in the country (AVerdade, 2026; DW, 2026). Additionally, an ongoing proposed legislative amendment to the Highway Code also seeks to impose fines exceeding the minimum wage for blocking public roads (Carta de Moçambique, 2026).

From another perspective, during Chapo's first year in office, the judiciary, which is heavily influenced by the executive branch, was used for the first time to address a political conflict, potentially neutralising an opposition figure. In July 2025, former presidential candidate Mondlane was formally charged by the Attorney General's Office with five criminal offences in connection with the post-election protests (including incitement to terrorism) (AIM, 2025) and, if convicted, will be barred from standing in the 2029 elections. Thus, whilst the Government is apparently seeking remedies to the post-election crisis through the national dialogue, there appears to be some denial and resistance within FRELIMO to acknowledging the root causes. And while the new policies might not seem unusual elsewhere, in Mozambique, given recent events, taken as a whole, they raise reasonable suspicions of an increasing trend towards authoritarianism.

Finally, the third process concerns the political sidelining of former presidential candidate Mondlane. Following the signing of the Political Commitment, two bilateral meetings between President Chapo and Mondlane took place on 24 March and 21 May 2025. While suggesting the beginning of a dual-track dialogue process: a more formal and public one represented by COTE, and a more discreet and bilateral one

### The Stages of the Inclusive National Dialogue (2025-2027)



Source: the author, based on COTE, 2025.

involving Mondlane, these were one-off meetings with no follow-up. To counter his exclusion from the IND decision-making structures — that is, he was not the leader of any political party — Mondlane decided to

## Acknowledgments

*This publication is part of the ongoing project “Social Legitimation of Peace in ‘Contested Cities’: Peacebuilding and Post-conflict Governance in Urban Mozambique”. This research and the author are supported by EU Horizon Europe under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND grant No 101081327 YUFE4Postdocs. In 2025, field research in Mozambique also benefited from a Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) travel grant (No V452025N).*

*The author would like to thank the Institute for Social and Economic Studies (IESE) for its support during the fieldwork.*

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this Analysis & Policy Brief are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Development Institute (IOB).

May 2026

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form ‘ANAMOLA’, which was officially registered in August 2025. Yet his request to be included in the national dialogue was not considered. To avoid further political marginalisation, in early September 2025, Mondlane took up a seat on the Council of State’s advisory body by virtue of his status as the second-most-voted presidential candidate. Afterwards, faced with the silent refusal to include ANAMOLA in the COTE, the new party decided to launch a parallel consultation process to gather the concerns of ‘the real people’ on the streets. However, as the process advances and political negotiations on the prioritisation of reform proposals approach, their willingness to join the IND decision-making spaces continues.

## Conclusion (to be continued)

One year after the signing of the Political Commitment, the situation in urban Mozambique appears to have “returned to normal”. However, none of the structural factors underlying the 2024 post-election crisis has changed, leaving the horizon uncertain and vulnerable to worsening global instability.

The launch of the Inclusive National Dialogue represents an opportunity and could be an effective approach to addressing the 2024 post-election crisis and other latent conflicts. In fact, some of its innovative features are worth highlighting, such as the establishment of a multi-party platform with equal representation among nine signatory parties — moving away from the ‘classical’ bipolarity FRELIMO-RENAMO; the official appointment of 3 out of its 21 members originating from civil society and academia; and, most importantly, the representation of nearly 40% of women on it. It is also worth noting the emphasis of the official discourse regarding the need to ‘listen to the people’ and to consult with different segments of society on their concerns (and potential solutions). These are key aspects that can positively shape the process of seeking sustainable reforms for peace and reconciliation.

At the same time, one year into this new peace initiative, several critical questions remain.

Firstly, the ‘elephant in the room’ is the continued refusal of the signatory parties to bring in a key figure of the 2024 elections into the decision-making structures of the national dialogue. While Mondlane’s involvement does not guarantee success, the exclusion of the second most-voted presidential candidate, who led the post-election demonstrations, undermines the process’s credibility.

Second, it is uncertain whether there will be sufficient technical capacity and political will to translate and prioritise the competing citizens’ interests and concerns gathered during the consultation phase into specific, viable reform proposals, particularly if doing so would run counter to the political and economic interests of the signatory parties, especially the ruling party elite.

Finally, a key challenge that should not be left unattended until the end of the process (or taken for granted) is its social buy-in or legitimacy. Despite the constraints of the IND’s calendar’s sequential phase logic, it seems desirable to advance some ‘quick-wins’ to convey hope in a concrete, tangible way to ‘ordinary citizens’ and keep the most disadvantaged social groups, particularly urban youth, engaged in the process. A national dialogue led by political parties might run the risk of overlooking the fact that, alongside outrage over electoral irregularities and police violence, many citizens took to the streets because of increasingly difficult living conditions and a lack of prospects. To this end, it would be useful for the signatory parties (and the international partners supporting the process) to recall the principle of ‘implementing while negotiating’ ([Sanghrajka & Manzoni, 2025](#)), which, despite the obvious contextual differences, proved key to building trust and overcoming obstacles in the previous peace process.