



## **CITATION OF THE PRIZE COMMITTEE OF THE MO IBRAHIM FOUNDATION**

This Award, from an African Foundation, is a celebration of achievement in Africa.

President Chissano's achievements in bringing peace, reconciliation, stable democracy and economic progress to his country greatly impressed the committee. So, too, did his decision to step down without seeking the third term the constitution allowed.

President Chissano took office after winning his country's first multi-party elections in 1994. The historic elections were held just two years after he had helped the country end, through negotiations, the 16-year civil war which had devastated Mozambique, left thousands dead and forced many to flee their homes. He led a country whose infrastructure and economy were ruined, its society deeply divided and which suffered from severe natural disasters.

Huge challenges remain but, under his two terms, Mozambique established a stable economy with robust growth and increased foreign direct investment. Its economy has been one of Africa's emerging success stories.

Although Mozambique remains one of the poorest countries in the world, poverty levels have fallen. The poverty reduction programmes also saw, from a low base, an increase in the number of children in education and improvements in health care. In addition, women were empowered to participate in the political and economic life of the country.

Solid efforts have been made to rebuild hospitals and schools destroyed during the prolonged civil war. The Government showed strong leadership in trying to tackle the HIV / AIDS epidemic.

But it is in his role in leading Mozambique from conflict to peace and democracy that President Chissano has made his most outstanding contribution. It is a measure of the change that has taken place that national and regional elections have been contested in a generally peaceful manner by both sides in the bitter civil war. This remarkable reconciliation between opponents provides a shining example to the rest of the world, and is testament to both his strength of character and his leadership.

His decision not to seek a third Presidential term reinforced Mozambique's democratic maturity and demonstrated that institutions and the democratic process were more important than personalities.

President Chissano also made a major contribution outside his country's borders. He was a powerful voice for Africa on the international stage and played an important role in pushing debt relief up the agenda. He served as Chairman of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union. His skills and experience in conflict resolution have been used more recently during the elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo and as the United Nations Special Envoy to Northern Uganda. For the manner in which he held high office as President, and his more recent contribution, he is held in high esteem throughout the African continent.

For these reasons, President Joaquim Alberto Chissano is the first winner of the Mo Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership.