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BILATERAL RELATIONS

INDIA - MOZAMBIQUE

INTRODUCTION

India and Mozambique share a warm, historic partnership rooted in centuries-old Indian Ocean trade networks and India's early support for Mozambique's independence struggle. Formal diplomatic relations were established on June 25, 1975, when India opened its resident mission in Maputo, followed by the opening of the Mozambican High Commission in New Delhi in 2001. As fellow members of the Commonwealth and key partners in the Global South, both nations maintain High Commissions in each other's capitals and collaborate closely across bilateral and multilateral forums.

Having celebrated 50 years of diplomatic relations in 2025, the bilateral engagement has entered its sixth decade with strong institutional momentum. Guided by regular high-level exchanges—including the Foreign Office Consultations and the Joint Defence Working Group held in Maputo in 2026—both countries continue to deepen cooperation across energy and trade, maritime security, development capacity-building, and vibrant people-to-people ties anchored by a long-standing Indian diaspora.



HISTORY

Long before the arrival of European powers in the Indian Ocean, seafaring merchants from western India—particularly Gujarat—maintained thriving maritime trade networks along the Mozambican coast. Guided by seasonal monsoon winds, Indian traders exchanged textiles, glass beads, and spices for gold, ivory, and timber, establishing permanent coastal communities. Writing in the 12th century, the renowned geographer Muhammad al-Idrisi recorded active Indian settlements in the historic port region of Sofala. He noted that the region incorporated several towns, including Sayuna, which he described as "medium in size and its inhabitants are a collection of people from Hind [India], Zunuj, and others".

Following Vasco da Gama's arrival in 1498 and the onset of Portuguese rule in 1505, commercial and administrative links between Portuguese territories in Goa and Mozambique deepened the Indian presence. Over subsequent centuries, Indian merchants, artisans, and professionals settled across Mozambican port towns and inland commercial centres, becoming integral to the local economy.

In the modern era, shared anti-colonial solidarity forged strong political bonds. After attaining independence in 1947, India became a vocal champion of African decolonization and extended firm diplomatic and moral support to Mozambique's liberation movement. When Mozambique achieved independence on June 25, 1975, India was among the very first nations to recognize the new republic and establish a diplomatic mission in Maputo—laying a resilient foundation for a partnership now in its sixth decade.



ECONOMIC RELATION

Economic and commercial cooperation forms the cornerstone of modern India–Mozambique relations. India is one of Mozambique's top trading and investment partners, with over 100 Indian companies operating across the country and cumulative Indian investments valued at approximately USD 10 billion. Bilateral trade—which crossed USD 5 billion in 2022–23 and stood at USD 4.4 billion in 2023–24—is anchored by complementary strengths. India primarily exports refined petroleum products, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, and rice, while importing coking coal, raw cashews, and agricultural produce from Mozambique.

Mozambique plays a vital role in India's long-term energy security. Indian public-sector energy companies—ONGC Videsh (16%), Bharat PetroResources (10%), and Oil India (4%)—collectively hold a 30% participating interest in the flagship Rovuma Offshore Area 1 liquefied natural gas (LNG) project in Cabo Delgado Province. Following the lifting of force majeure in late 2025, full-scale construction on the project resumed in January 2026.

In the mining sector, Indian enterprises are central to Mozambique's coal industry in Tete Province. International Coal Ventures Limited (ICVL), a consortium of Indian state-run steel and mining firms, operates the Benga coal mine to supply metallurgical coal to India, while private Indian conglomerate Vulcan operates the Moatize coal mine and the Nacala Logistics Corridor. Alongside hydrocarbons and mining, bilateral cooperation is expanding into clean energy—building on the 2015 Memorandum of Understanding on Renewable Energy signed during President Filipe Nyusi's visit to India—as well as agro-processing, healthcare, and infrastructure.



MILITARY COOPERATION

In September 1986, India was asked to provide technical assistance and security forces to protect the Beira Corridor. Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe asked for the deployment of a squadron of Indian Air Force Mig-21 aircraft with Indian pilots to provide air cover for the corridor: half the aircraft were to be based in Harare and half in Chimoio, Mozambique. But Rajiv Gandhi decided that deployment of the Indian Air Force to Mozambique was too much of a reversal of India's public stance against the overseas deployment of Indian forces or carried too much risk for India. New Delhi may have decided instead to secretly provide assistance to the Mozambique through providing what has been called ‘a small naval presence’ in Mozambique waters.

The two states also work closely on issues of security, especially maritime safety in the Indian Ocean; in June 2011, government ministers met and agreed to work together on the issue. In 2010, the Indian Navy rescued a Mozambican vessel from pirates. In 2012, the Indian Navy agreed to commence antipiracy patrols in the Mozambique Channel, apparently without prior consultation with South Africa.

Indian Navy has berthing rights in Mozambique. When Cyclone Idai hit Mozambique, India diverted three ships of the Indian Navy to provide assistance. The ships INS Sujata, ICGS Sarathi and INS Shardul rescued 192 people and provided medical assistance to 1,381 people. Fourth ship INS Magar joined in by bringing relief materials. Helicopters from the ship made sorties conducting aerial survey helping the disaster management efforts and dropped food, water and medical supplies in cyclone hit areas.



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