

Food shortage could lead to turmoil after election

MAPUTO — A lack of food threatens Mozambique's social stability after the country's first multiparty elections scheduled for tomorrow and Friday.

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) said yesterday a shortfall in food aid threatened the resettlement of hundreds of thousands of refugees and endangered the transition.

Western diplomats say crime and banditry have risen sharply in recent months because of the desperation of thousands of demobilised soldiers and former refugees. They predict riots and social discontent over the deteriorating economic situation, no matter who wins the elections.

WFP country director Philip Clarke said since July the return of 300 000 more Mozambican refugees than was initially estimated from neighbouring countries was putting se-

vere strains on food resources, and a crisis could result.

The problem was intensified by drought and crop failure in the country's centre, and a higher than estimated number of demobilised soldiers and their dependents.

"The WFP had initially planned for a maximum of 1.5-million beneficiaries in March 1995 at the peak of the lean season before the harvest. But as early as October 1994, 1.4-million people already need food aid," Clarke said.

WFP spokeswoman Mercedes Sayagues said the programme's commitments to Mozambique for 1994-95 was 110 000 tons of food worth about \$40m. Now an additional \$14m was needed.

"We cannot be without that food," said Clarke. "The implications are very serious." — Sapa-Reuter.

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