

CT. **Helping hand** ^{9/10} ₉₀

THE spectre of famine is stalking Angola and Mozambique as long-standing guerilla conflict continues in both countries, against the worldwide trend towards regional peace.

In Angola 10 000 people people have already died of starvation as a result of the civil war between the MPLA government and the Unita rebels and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced from their homes, mostly in the war-torn south of the country. In Mozambique more than a million people have been displaced and hundreds of thousands face starvation.

The conflict in Mozambique imposes a huge load on Zimbabwe and the region as a whole. President Mugabe is obliged to keep large forces in the field to guard his road and rail links and oil pipeline to the sea. Meanwhile, sporadic peace talks between Maputo and Renamo are taking place. But it is doubtful whether a peace agreement would be universally heeded by Renamo warlords, as some of them at least seem to be operating on their own account rather than in the interests of any political cause.

Peace talks are likewise in progress between Dr Savimbi's Unita and the MPLA government. Yet the United States continues to arm and support Unita, in the belief that this will promote the negotiations. The risk, however, is a result to the contrary, encouraging Unita to intensify its efforts in the field rather than at the conference table.

South Africa has a legacy of distrust to overcome as a result of a decade of SADF destabilisation of the region. Yet the De Klerk government, in putting aside the aggression of its predecessor, should intervene this time on the side of peace, helping the innocent victims of the conflict to survive its ravages. It is not only right: it is in South Africa's interests to do so.