

ARGUS 29/1/93

1 000 Italian troops bound for Maputo

ROME. — Italy is to send more than 1 000 troops to Mozambique as part of a United Nations peace-keeping force in the country, the Italian foreign ministry said.

The statement said Italy had received a formal request from the UN to take part.

The country would send 1 200-1 300 troops for a period of six months to the drought-stricken country, which is struggling to recover from 16 years of civil war.

It said the troop deployment was imminent but gave no specific departure date.

The use of Italian troops as part of a proposed 7 500-strong UN force was approved by the Italian government last month.

The Mozambique government under President Joaquim Chissano signed an agreement in Rome in October with Renamo rebels to end the civil war.

President Chissano has subsequently said the implementation of the peace accord is way behind schedule and multi-party elections planned for next October may have to be delayed.

"The imminent departure of a military contingent, of which Italy makes up the biggest component, appears the best guarantee for the consolidation of the peace process," the foreign ministry statement said.

Italy is engaged in its biggest military operation on the African continent since its African army was defeated and captured in World War 2.

It has also sent some 2 500 troops to participate in relief efforts for war-ravaged Somalia. — Sapa-Reuter.
