

UN operations slow in Mozambique

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MAPUTO, Mozambique — Six weeks after the Security Council approved it, the UN operation in Mozambique has barely started its task of getting a destitute, war-ravaged nation ready for elections.

Fewer than 100 of the 7 500 people involved had arrived by the end of January and the US\$332 million budget awaited approval at UN headquarters in New York.

Unless everything speeds up dramatically, it seems unlikely that elections can be organised by October, as stipulated in the 1992 cease-fire agreement that ended 16 years of civil war.

Mr Aldo Ajello, the UN special representative, says the elections almost certainly will be delayed until April or May of 1994, after the rainy season, which hinders transportation in rural areas.

In this decaying capital, surrounded by the mud and reed shanties of war refugees, people fix the blame on a variety of targets, from UN bureaucratic wrangling to the destroyed infrastructure.

"We are very disappointed," said Mr Manfredo di Camerana, the Italian ambassador, who played a leading role in peace talks. "It's very

difficult to know from the United Nations when they are in position to start".

UN officials agree with local leaders that events in Yugoslavia, Angola, Cambodia and Somalia have distracted UN attention from Mozambique. But few seem to doubt their ability to bring about Mozambique's first multi-party elections and start the reconstruction process.

They say they will take whatever time is necessary to avoid the failure of other UN efforts in Yugoslavia and Angola.

"There is consensus to look on Mozambique as a very important operation," said Mr Eric Lubin, chief adviser to Mr Ajello. "It could be the first operation that's successful for a long time."

Civil war in Mozambique began after independence from Portugal in 1975 and pitted the Marxist government against an anti-communist rebel movement known as Renamo.

Agreement by the government to allow multiple political parties and free elections led to the cease-fire accord signed October 4 in Rome by President Joaquim Chissano and Mr Afonso Dhlakama, the Renamo leader.

The peace plan,

negotiated with the help of Italian diplomats, the Roman Catholic Church and the United Nations, calls for creating a new army under joint control and holding elections under UN supervision, all within a year.

One provision gave fighters six days after the signing to report to assembly points. As January ended, the locations of assembly points were still being decided.

"The schedule was completely inconsistent with reality," said Mr Ajello, who was sent by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to oversee the programme. "I don't even take it into consideration."

Reality in this African country is mined roads, destroyed bridges, a largely illiterate population, few supplies, little housing and an economy de-

pendent on foreign aid and food.

Government statistics are grim. Life expectancy of about 44 years, 60 percent of the 15 million people impoverished, 40 600 people to every doctor.

Political leaders, foreign diplomats and UN officials agree that both government and rebel forces must be demobilised before the election campaign begins.

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