

Shoestring peace about to snap

FROM his spartan headquarters on the eleventh floor of a dilapidated central Maputo hotel, Aldo Ajello, head of the UN Operation in Mozambique (Unomoz), gazes out upon a country apparently in the throes of transformation.

When Frelimo seized power in 1974 it proclaimed a one-party Marxist state so doctrinaire that even the shoeshine stalls were nationalised. Opposition was banned and peasants were forcibly collectivised.

Education standards fell so steeply that researchers found that the majority of Mozambicans could not count past 10.

Then in 1990 President Joaquim Chissano announced a spectacular reversal of policy. The state officially abandoned Marxism and embraced capitalist development.

Now, with money from the World Bank and help from about 200 newly arrived aid agencies swilling around and providing 80 percent of the country's income, there are real signs of recovery.

But the burning question is whether Mozambique is experiencing a false dawn. Western ambassadors in Maputo are warning their

MOZAMBIQUE

United Nations red tape keeps the Blue Berets from arriving to guarantee stability, reports FRED BRIDGLAND in Maputo

governments that the Mozambican peace process — to which the West has committed R4-billion — is in danger of ignominious failure unless serious United Nations logjams are removed.

Postponed

"There's a facade of peace here because a ceasefire is holding very well so far despite the absence of UN peacekeepers," said Mr Ajello, a 57-year-old Italian. "But there are great risks and threats."

By the end of last year Mr Ajello was to have had 7 500 UN Blue Beret peacekeeping troops.

By this weekend the multinational cekeepers were meant to have seen the demobilisation of 48 000 of an estimated total of 80 000 government and rebel troops in prep-

aration for Mozambique's first multiparty general election in June.

Instead, despite the UN's decision to allocate R1-billion to Unomoz, not one UN peacekeeping soldier has yet arrived, not one Mozambican fighter has been demobilised, and the country's multiparty elections have been postponed indefinitely.

Mr Ajello is clear about where the problems lie. "There are so many UN missions in the field that administration units in New York are overwhelmed. We have the first UN military observers here, but I can't give them vehicles. To get vehicles I have to go through the contract committee in New York. That takes months."

Instead, Unomoz is operating on an emergency shoestring budget, renting vehicles temporarily from neighbouring countries, the nearest of which is South Africa.

A cherished slogan in Maputo is: "Angola can never happen in Mozambique," a reference to Angola's quick return to bloody civil war after multiparty elections were held under limited UN supervision. But that is precisely the danger now confronting Mozambique. — *The Telegraph, London.*