

INTERNATIONAL

UN warns of delays in Mozambique peace pact

NEW YORK — The United Nations Security Council has called on the Mozambique government and the rebel Renamo group to immediately comply with peace accords and demobilise their forces.

The UN operation in Mozambique is months behind schedule, due mainly to the late arrival of UN forces because of a shortage of nations willing or able to commit troops to the southeast African nation. But a fragile ceasefire is holding.

Many diplomats fear that if the UN peacekeeping operation falls behind further Mozambique could deteriorate into fighting similar to that in nearby Angola. The council in December approved more than 7 500 troops, police and civilians for the UN Operation in Mozambique, known as ONUMOZ.

To date, 1 500 Italian soldiers have arrived as well as contingents from Uruguay, Botswana and Bangladesh. Japan has also pledged to send forces to Mozambique.

In its resolution, adopted unanimously on Wednesday, the council also approved a report from Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in which he criticised the rebel group Renamo for refusing to demobilise until 65 percent of the UN troops had arrived.

Consequently, the government also fell behind a timetable worked out in peace agreements signed in Rome last October meant to end the civil war, including fostering new elections.

British Ambassador Sir David Hannay said it was imperative that Renamo follow up on its pledge to participate in the peace process and military training programme. Britain is training units of a new Mozambique army at bases in Zimbabwe.

Mozambique's UN Ambassador, Pedro Commissario Afonso, pledged to move on a legal status of forces agreement with the United Nations that allows the UN freedom of movement and exemption from taxes. Dr Boutros-Ghali and the Council complained Mozambique was charging the United Nations customs duties and other taxes that should be exempt.

Mr Afonso said he only received the agreement in mid-February, months after the operation had been authorised. He said his government had just "submitted its views" on the pact "and looks forward to signing as soon as negotiations are concluded".

The ambassador also said that repatriation of 1.5 million refugees was impossible until the United Nations had been given information on mines, which Renamo had not done.

He said none of the steps to enforce a ceasefire had been implemented although fighting had subsided. He said Renamo had not appointed representatives to a number of joint commissions and had not sent police and soldiers for training.

The council also urged a meeting

between Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano and Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama. The ambassador said this would happen soon but warned that this would "not remove the remaining hurdles in the peace agreement".

Meanwhile, President Joaquim Chissano on Wednesday accused Renamo of bringing new arms supplies into the country despite last October's peace agreement ending 16 years of civil war.

"Renamo is training an armed force which has received weapons from abroad," state radio quoted Mr Chissano as telling a rally in the Mozambican town of Chimioio.

He said that in just one day 10 planes had landed at the Renamo (Mozambican National Resistance) bush headquarters at Maringue, 160 km to the north-east. He said the planes had come from Malawi.

He warned that the government would defend itself.

"We will defend ourselves and we will not die like chickens. We do not want the Angolan situation to be repeated here in Mozambique," he said.

Despite his tough speech, Mr Chissano is expected to meet soon with Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama, who has remained at Maringue despite the October peace pact. Mr Dhlakama alleges the government has not offered him adequate accommodation in the capital, Maputo.

— Ziana-Reuter