

Aid for Maputo

IN the House of Assembly in Harare on November 11, the Prime Minister, Cde Mugabe, warned that if the Frelimo government in Mozambique were defeated by anti-revolutionary forces Zimbabwe would be the next target for those forces.

Cde Mugabe was restating Zimbabwe's unflinching commitment, which is already being demonstrated, in helping Mozambique beat off bandits of the South African-backed Mozambique National Resistance.

What was more, he said, if Zimbabwe fell, every other progressive country in Southern Africa would become a target for destabilisation by South Africa.

Cde Mugabe could have gone even further and stated that the defeat of progressive countries in this region would also imperil peace and stability in other countries further away from the present area of political conflict — witness reports, which have not been denied, that the cantankerous boers are contemplating attacks on the West African state of Nigeria.

Thus the key message in Cde Mugabe's speech, which should have registered on the minds of those in the international community who claim to be our all-weather friends, was that assistance of whatever kind must be rallied for Mozambique as a matter of urgency.

In his interview published yesterday the new President of Mozambique, Cde Joaquim Chissano, underscored that same plea when he said his country was hoping to get more support not only from the other Frontline countries but also from those nations which were given a full picture of the problems in the region during the Non-Aligned Summit in Harare in August.

Stated otherwise, what both Cde Mugabe and Cde Chissano are trying to say to the world is that Mozambique is holding the fort not only for its own survival but for all progressive mankind in Africa.

That therefore qualifies it for considerably more and swifter aid than that for the other nations, at this point in time.

It has to be recalled, too, that the Frelimo government inherited a poor country whose infrastructure was further sabotaged at independence by departing skilled Portuguese.

Added to that, bandit activity by the MNR has not only made reconstruction on a large scale well-nigh impossible; the drought, which has resulted in boom and bust economies in many other African countries, has had particularly devastating effects in Mozambique with millions of people threatened by famine.

Yet in spite of all that the late President Machel, and now President Chissano, have stoically held the country together in the face of the formidable forces ranged against both men.

The litmus test for the international community's voiced solidarity with Mozambicans will be the nature of the community's response to the pleas for both food and military assistance.

Of course, help should also be extended to other Frontline States which, together with Mozambique, form a bulwark against apartheid and its concomitant evils.