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Making it work

South Africa's efforts to bring the MNR to heel are praiseworthy both from the point of view of moral obligation and for the boost to morale they will give supporters of the Nkomati Accord.

So far, the agreement has brought little benefit to Mozambique short of an end to South African incursions, for the rebels seem to have had either an excellent stockpile of arms or an efficient resupply line — allegedly involving clandestine shipments from South African-based sources.

South Africa has made it clear any such pipeline will be blocked off immediately, but the war could well drag on unless we can hammer out some sort of accommodation between the rebels and the Machel government.

Certainly, as it is generally accepted that the MNR was very much a creature of South Africa in pre-accord days, the moral obligation to tidy up the loose ends is strong.

But by entering into negotiations to end the fighting, we are demonstrating our genuine wish for peace on the sub-continent and making it clear to the doubters that we mean business and can deliver the goods.

Success will give the sub-continent's pragmatists — a growing body — valuable ammunition in their fight to convince Southern African leaders that South Africa-baiting comes low on the list of priorities in an impoverished region.