

East Timor
Friday 26 January 2001

Mr. Neewoor (Mauritius): Let me take this opportunity to express our deep sympathy to the Governments and peoples of India and Pakistan for the earthquake disaster they have just suffered.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report of 16 January on the situation in East Timor. We also thank Mr. Vieira de Mello, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor, for his important briefing. We very much appreciate also the briefing by Mr. Malloch Brown, the United Nations Development Programme Administrator; Mr. Klaus Rohland, the Country Director of the World Bank responsible for East Timor; and Mr. Luis Valdivieso of the International Monetary Fund. We warmly welcome the presence at this meeting of the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Harri Holkeri, and Mr. José Ramos-Horta, a distinguished freedom fighter and member of the Transitional Cabinet of East Timor. We thank these people for their important statements this morning.

It is indeed very heartening to read the report of the Secretary-General. Viewing the current situation against the backdrop of the recent traumatic history of East Timor, one feels extremely gratified to note that not only have peace and calm now been firmly established in the country, but the people of East Timor are heading towards achieving their cherished goal of independence, shortly and in a systematically well-prepared manner. Mr. Vieira de Mello and his United Nations transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) team, who are working diligently and imaginatively to implement the UNTAET mandate, deserve to be complimented highly for doing such a great deal in so little time. We also thank the Government of Indonesia for facilitating the process.

We see in the plan worked out by the United Nations Transitional Administration to take East Timor to independence in the next few months a blueprint for a successful new and democratic nation. We are pleased that the plans of UNTAET are proceeding according to an established time-frame in spite of many challenges. We are particularly happy that the people of East Timor have been fully involved in the decision-making process from the very outset. We also note with satisfaction that the people of East Timor are being trained and organized to take charge of the administrative machinery and the institutions so vital for the success of a newly independent and democratic nation. This is a crucial factor in the preparations for the independence of East Timor.

We are sure the people of East Timor understand that with independence they will have to shoulder collectively as well as individually the responsibility for the well-being of all the people of their new nation. In this regard, the great responsibility always lies with the political leaders, who by their own examples are expected to inculcate in the people a culture of respect for the democratic process and the institutions of the nation. We are glad to note that a multi-party political structure is envisaged for East Timor. We welcome this, as such a system works on the basis of accountable governance and responsible opposition.

We believe that East Timor is now poised to engage in the electoral process necessary for the concretization of its independence. We wish that all East Timorese, including those who currently find themselves in West Timor as refugees, will be able to participate in the process, which must be inclusive. In this regard, we invite the Government of Indonesia to extend all the cooperation possible to facilitate the early return of the refugees, whose return home is being obstructed by the militias in West Timor. We further invite the Government of Indonesia to enter into early discussion with UNTAET to finalize a definite date for the independence of East Timor.

Finally, my delegation wishes to thank all the countries that are supporting the work of UNTAET through the provision of manpower and technical and financial support. We also express our appreciation to all the agencies of the United Nations system for the valuable work they are currently performing in East Timor. We recognize in particular the work done by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. We have no doubt that the larger international community and the international financial institutions will come forward to contribute liberally to facilitate the process under way leading to the independence of East Timor, as well as for the development agenda of the country after independence.

My delegation supports the extension of the mandate of UNTAET for a further period of 12 months, until 31 December 2001, as recommended in paragraph 52 of the report of the Secretary General of 16 January 2001