

Statement by Hon. Minister Gayan on East Timor – 30 Jan. 2002

The important statement made this morning by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, The Honourable John Howard, shows the interest which East Timor's neighbour takes in its future. Let me, on behalf of my Government and on my personal behalf, congratulate Mr. Ramos-Horta, Senior Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, and the people of East Timor for the considerable progress achieved on the path to independence. We wish to assure him of our full cooperation.

I join other delegations also in thanking Mr. Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for the comprehensive briefing he gave this morning.

I would also like to express my profound appreciation to the Secretary-General for his valuable report.

My delegation echoes the appreciation and satisfaction expressed by other delegations for the positive developments in East Timor. We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his outstanding leadership. His exemplary efforts and excellent work deserve all our gratitude and praise. We also extend our gratitude to the entire staff of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) for preparing the newly born State for a peaceful and smooth transition to independence.

The United Nations justly deserves all the merit for conducting a successful operation in East Timor and to take credit for this historic success. The painful past is gone and the people of East Timor must derive immense satisfaction from the thought that their quest for self-determination was legitimate and unquestionable. We must now look to the future with hope and determination that East Timor will emerge as a full-fledged nation ready to assume its rightful place in the international community and to chart a way for the welfare, development and prosperity of all the people of East Timor. Mauritius has been closely associated with the liberation struggle of the East Timorese people and it is with a great sense of satisfaction that we

welcome the successful outcome of that struggle. As a small island State, we are happy that another island State of similar size will be joining the United Nations family.

My delegation is pleased to learn that the Assembly is in the process of reviewing the draft constitution, which will lead the island to a unitary democratic State based on the rule of law, the principle of separation of powers and all the institutions that foster an accountable and responsible Government. We are happy to note that the Timorization process in the economic and administrative sectors is also on the right track.

Like other members, Mauritius fully supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the renewal of UNTAET's mandate until 20 May 2002. In view of the success achieved so far, there is no scope or room for any mistake. It is the duty of the United Nations to ensure that everything is done to complete the process in time. Nothing should jeopardize this process. If we are to consolidate our gains and realize the legitimate aspirations of the East Timorese to attaining statehood, we must ensure that the transition is seamless, smooth and obstacle-free.

At this juncture, East Timor needs assistance at all levels in order to instil confidence in the people and to encourage them to forge ahead in shaping the destiny of their own country in accordance with their culture, tradition and political history. It is therefore essential that international assistance to East Timor revert to a normal development level as soon as feasible.

The United Nations, with the help of UNTAET, has given birth to a nation. The international community should now continue nurturing it and prepare the small island nation to operate as a viable State. This is the crucial phase in the political history of any country, especially a newborn one. We must therefore ensure the success of the new State by maintaining security and by building a sustainable administrative and economic base, as mentioned in paragraph 98 of the Secretary-General's report. It is extremely important that East Timor continue to benefit for some time to come, especially after its independence, from United Nations assistance in the form of civilian expertise in various fields of administration and other sectors.

We are happy to learn that the presidential election is scheduled for 14 April. We hope that the maturity shown in the election last August will continue to prevail and that democracy will be given another positive push forward in East Timor.

It is undeniable that peace and stability hinge on the level of security in any State. The risk of both political and criminally driven violence should at all costs be avoided. It is therefore important for competent and adequate police units and law enforcement officers to establish and maintain law and order. We note with satisfaction that training programmes for civilian police, as well as for the East Timor Defence Force, are being accelerated.

My delegation also appreciates the fact that the rate of refugee returns has increased and that nearly 7,000 refugees returned to East Timor over the past period, bringing the total returns to 192,000. We hope that those remaining in the camps of West Timor will soon join their fellow brothers and sisters in independent East Timor. We believe that the voluntary returnees need necessary assistance and support for rehabilitation and should be given the opportunity to serve their country in any appropriate capacity. We call on the international agencies and bilateral donors to continue supporting the rehabilitation programme in a sustained manner.

The significant and historical achievement in East Timor would not have been possible without the unflinching support of the Government of Indonesia. We highly commend the consistent and continuous dialogues between Indonesia and UNTAET/East Timor, paving the way to peaceful coexistence. We applaud the initiatives of the Indonesian Government to hold talks at the ministerial level with UNTAET/East Timor, aimed at providing an appropriate forum to reassess and build upon the progress achieved and to explore ways and means of resolving any outstanding matters.

We note the issue of the presidential decree of 12 January regarding the appointment of 18 judges to the Ad Hoc Human Rights Court and the recent talks held between Indonesian and East Timorese justice officials with a view to promoting legal and judicial cooperation between the two sides. We welcome the ongoing

discussions at the level of the Joint Border Committee on the question of the Tactical Coordination Line. We hope that this issue will be addressed as soon as possible to the satisfaction of both parties. My delegation welcomes the formal setting up of the East Timorese Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation last Monday. Like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, this Commission will serve as an important forum for undoing the wrongs and paving the way for a clean Administration. We welcome the appointment of seven Timorese commissioners and we wish them all the best in their new responsibilities. We are grateful to the multilateral and bilateral donors for their pledges and we encourage them to continue supporting the Commission.

The moment has come for the Security Council to send an unequivocal signal to the people of East Timor and to the international community that a rightly sized, strong and continued presence of the United Nations will have to be maintained for a period of two years from the date of independence to ensure the stability of East Timor. In this regard, we endorse the plan for a successor mission providing for a continued and appropriately reduced United Nations peacekeeping mission in the post-independence era. The mandate outlined in the annex to the report is pragmatic and realistic.

There is no doubt that East Timor will emerge as a strong, viable and prosperous nation with the assistance of the international community, and that it will stand ready to shoulder its responsibilities on its own after the departure of the successor mission.