

Statement by Mr. Gokhool on the situation in East Timor
14 November 2002

My delegation, like others, also extends a warm welcome to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Kamallesh Sharma, and thanks him for his informative briefing in introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET). We commend the Special Representative for the excellent manner in which he has steered the work of UNMISSET since its inception, and we wish him and his team much success in the fulfilment of the Mission's mandate and in addressing the principal challenges that confront the young island State and to which he has just referred.

We are pleased to note that the Government of Timor-Leste and its national institutions have assumed responsibility for the management and conduct of its affairs. The report clearly highlights the developments in Timor-Leste after independence. We take note of the progress towards the promotion of a broad-based democracy in Timor-Leste through the establishment of legislative, executive and judicial structures. An effective and functioning democracy must have necessary safeguards for the protection of human rights and the promotion of the rule of law. We are particularly pleased to see that the protection of human rights in Timor-Leste is being institutionalized. We are confident that the office of the "*Provedor*" will carry out its activities in the most professional manner.

It is heartening to learn that the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, established to facilitate reconciliation with justice, has commenced its operational phase. A country that has suffered from so many traumas and been subjected to untold hardships cannot embark on nation-building without justice being seen to be done. Nation-building is never complete without a consolidated, united and peace-loving society. In this regard, Mauritius believes that more is required in order to encourage longer-term reconciliation among the Timorese. Importance must, therefore, be given to nation-building, capacity building and institution-building.

The strong commitment of the Security Council and the international community has been instrumental in the success achieved so far in Timor-Leste. As the report observes, it is important that the Security Council and

the donor community remain engaged, so as to build upon the outstanding contribution that has been made to date. The Security Council should therefore continue to support the country in order to preserve and promote its political and economic independence.

It is undeniable that without a strong and well equipped public administration it would be difficult to implement the programmes of the Government. The challenges mentioned in paragraphs 11, 12 and 13 must therefore be addressed as soon as possible in order to maintain the stability and move forward with the developmental process. We hope that the donor community will make additional efforts by providing the funding required enabling the commitments to materialize. We fully agree that the support of multilateral and bilateral donors in ensuring the economic and social well-being of Timor-Leste is vital for the long-term stability of the country.

We welcome the progress made so far in the Timorization process in all sectors, particularly in the police and defence forces. It is encouraging to learn that a total of 2,285 Timor-Leste Police Service officers are now serving their country. We fully support this process and hope that the joint assessment mission, planned to take place this month with the involvement of the Government of Timor-Leste, the United Nation and donor countries, will come up with proposals that will address the needs of the Timor-Leste Police Service. We are happy to note that the first phase of the four-phase downsizing programme will be completed as planned by the end of November, and we hope that the national defence force will become fully operational by June 2004.

The resolution of the refugee problem is, indeed, a matter of high priority. No effort should be spared to accelerate the voluntary return of refugees who remain in West Timor. The extremely low return rate registered in October is a matter of concern. We commend the initiative of President Gusmão to make a personal appeal to the refugees to return. The process of reconciliation and nation-building will be more effectively consolidated by the voluntary return of the refugees and by providing them with the necessary facilities for their full integration into society.

My delegation is gratified at the pace at which Timor-Leste is forging its relationships abroad. We are pleased to note that it has established diplomatic relations with almost all States members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations, and has become a member of the World Bank,

the Asian Development Bank and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries. As a small island State, Timor-Leste needs the support of the international and regional communities in its economic reconstruction efforts and in building a solid, united and peaceful country.

My delegation takes particular note of the constructive approach demonstrated by President Megawati Soekarnoputri of Indonesia. The creation of a Joint Ministerial Commission for Bilateral Cooperation to address issues of mutual concern in the maintenance of the Joint Border Committee is a real and significant step forward. This shows the genuine commitment of both countries to the success and prosperity of Timor-Leste.

Finally, let me commend the people of Timor-Leste and its leaders for their undying spirit in rebuilding their country. Although their road to independence was long and difficult, the resilience and true dedication of the people of Timor-Leste for the well-being of their country will certainly make that small island State a prosperous and peaceful place to live.