

**Informal Consultation between Donors and UN Agencies,
Brussels, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm, Tuesday 5 December 2000**

Presentation by Mr. Finn Reske-Nielsen, UN Development Coordinator,
on behalf of the UN Agency Country Team in East Timor

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the UN Agency Country Team in East Timor, I am very pleased to welcome you to this informal consultation with us, taking advantage of the time we have before the Donors Meeting on East Timor this afternoon and tomorrow, which clearly is the main event. We are delighted that you have found the time to meet with us this morning.

Security Council resolution 1272 of 25 October 1999, which established the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor, “recognizes that, in developing and performing its functions under its mandate, UNTAET will need to draw on the expertise and capacity of Member States, United Nations agencies and other international organizations, including the international financial institutions”. The UN agencies, funds and programmes have responded positively to this challenge by supporting the Transitional Administration in their respective areas of expertise and competence. At the present time, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP (including UNV), WHO, WFP, ILO, UNHCR and UNOPS continue to maintain a presence in East Timor. In addition, IOM is an active member of the local agency country team.

I shall not attempt to provide you with a complete account of the many activities of the UN agencies over the past year, there are other mechanisms for that. However, I would like to give you a brief summary of some of the highlights, and also outline how we see our role in the year to come and beyond. Let me stress that I speak in my role as UN Development Coordinator, on behalf of all agencies active in East Timor.

Over the past twelve months, we have been bridging the gap between post-conflict immediate recovery and long-term development assistance. Emergency support has been provided to re-instate basic services, foster the socio-economic recovery of East Timor and provide immediate short-term technical assistance to UNTAET and ETТА. Much remains to be done.

On the humanitarian side, we have facilitated the repatriation and reintegration of more than 170,000 refugees. This has been done bearing in mind the need to link initial reintegration to longer-term community rehabilitation. The pace of repatriation has slowed considerably. However, we were pleased that the first repatriation of more than 400 “Milsas”, East Timorese former members of the Indonesian military and their families, took place smoothly in late November. This was the first sizeable repatriation since the tragic murder of our three UNHCR colleagues in West Timor in September.

The UN agencies have implemented some quick impact projects aimed at helping communities to restart their economic activities and to assist with reconciliation. We are responsible for the largest shelter rehabilitation programme in East Timor, assisting 35,000 families, with NGOs directly providing a further 15,000 kits.

However, it should be noted that a shelter “gap” of thousands of destroyed homes has yet to be covered.

The resettlement of returnees and displaced people has also been facilitated through food aid assistance. There has now been a shift to more targeted distributions of food, taking into account people's degree of self-reliance and level of livelihood disruption, in order to avoid dependency and expedite the return to normalcy.

Self-reliance has also been an objective in activities to resume agricultural production to restore food security and improve the nutritional status of rural and urban populations. A seed multiplication project has provided good quality rice and maize seed to dispossessed farmers and late returnees for the main cropping season, and we have also provided hand tillers to farmers to improve rice production.

One of the most immediate challenges that faced East Timor was the rehabilitation of the infrastructure, with over 80% of public facilities destroyed. The immediate repair of roads and resumption of electricity supply have been an immediate priority. Further work in this area is being undertaken with generous donor support. This includes rehabilitation of water and sanitation services, and restoring electricity services.

Turning to other key sectors, the UN agencies have played a major role in the health sector where many of the elements of a functioning health system are now in place. A communicable diseases surveillance system has been established and “Roll Back Malaria” strategy developed. A National TB Control Programme has been established and the immunization programme has commenced. Coverage of 80% was achieved in the first national polio immunization days in November. A central pharmacy has been established and a national essential drugs list has been developed. Reproductive health kits have been distributed throughout East Timor.

In education, the main focus has been to assist the reconstruction and recommencement of the primary education system. We paid stipends for teachers until these could be assimilated by UNTAET and supplied basic teaching materials and sports equipment. Under the primary school re-roofing project, 560 primary school classrooms have been re-roofed and all schools should have roofs by end March 2001.

Beyond immediate recovery, the UN agencies have embarked on long-term technical assistance in order to create the necessary institutional capacity and human resources for the sustainable development of the new nation. The UN agencies place particular stress on institution building and capacity building and we undertake a wide range of activities in this area including supporting the establishment of a fair and effective judiciary system in East Timor, assisting ETTA in developing a comprehensive training program for public servants, and promoting a strong civil society through capacity building of national NGOs.

Another key and critical area we work in is the provision of policy and advisory support to the Transitional Administration, drawing on the wide range of technical

and specialised expertise available among the UN agencies. This includes such diverse areas as border control, public accountability, employment standards, labour legislation, small enterprise development, and juvenile justice. We have also been concerned to promote and support issues such as gender, environment and human rights – issues, which we believe must be addressed now in order to ensure equitable and sustainable development. One of the most important new initiatives we have undertaken relates to HIV/AIDS. Now is the time to promote HIV/AIDS prevention and the UN agencies have just completed an assessment of the current situation and identified priority areas of intervention, which will be implemented with ETTA and civil society.

The wide range of activities of agency support is undertaken with many partners, including national and international NGOs. Several hundred UN volunteers form part of the core staff of UNTAET/ETTA. Coordination among the agencies is provided by the UN Development Coordinator, who plays much the same role as that of the Resident Coordinator in independent countries. In line with the reform programme of the UN Secretary-General, all agencies, with the exception of UNHCR, are located in common premises, and we have a variety of mechanisms to ensure regular and effective coordination among ourselves. We are, for example, in the process of establishing a database of all ongoing agency activities to be made available to ETTA to help donor coordination.

Let me stress that all activities of the agencies are designed and implemented under the overall umbrella of the SRSG. In dealing with ETTA, the UN agencies – at the request of the SRSG - have adopted much the same approach as we would in an independent country with a sovereign government. In other words, the agency programmes and projects are designed and implemented within the overall ETTA policy framework and development vision. Projects are developed in a collaborative manner and no resource mobilization is initiated without the explicit endorsement of ETTA.

As part of our efforts to establish a coherent and cohesive system of effective support to ETTA, we have just completed the first Common Country Assessment for East Timor. Later in this meeting, I shall make a brief presentation of the CCA, copies of which are available for all of you. It is envisaged that the first UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) will be prepared next year.

All the agencies are firmly committed to the further strengthening of inter-agency collaboration in the months and years to come. Complementary programming has already commenced in the area of HIV and AIDS and in the coming months it is expected that additional inter-agency working groups will be formed, possibly around the five main themes of the CCA, so as to promote further integration of activities, drawing on the comparative strengths of each agency.

We all expect East Timor to gain independence some time towards the end of next year. As agencies, we need to be well prepared for this both in terms of strengthening our support to UNTAET and ETTA and in terms of positioning ourselves as responsible and reliable partners for the new Government.

As UNTAET gradually shifts responsibility for administration to the East Timorese, the UN agencies need to be ready to assume greater responsibilities in their respective areas of expertise to maintain support to the new government. In this regard, we have initiated discussions with UNTAET and senior ETTA officials to seek agency involvement in the formulation and implementation of UNTAET's exit strategy. I need hardly point out the obvious fact that the manner in which UNTAET withdraws from East Timor will have a profound impact on the development of the country for years to come. This would apply equally to human resources development, institution building and rehabilitation and reconstruction of physical infrastructure. The ultimate aim should be to ensure a seamless transition to independence with all agencies being well positioned to assume their normal functions in an independent East Timor, subject to the request of the new Government.

At present, the development scene is complex with a broad range of multilateral and bilateral partners as well as international and national NGOs. We believe that it is important to maintain this pluralistic approach so that the Government of an independent East Timor will be able to draw on expertise and experience from many different sources, including the UN agencies, the Bretton Woods Institutions, bilateral donors and NGOs. All development cooperation will obviously need to be effectively coordinated by the Government.

The UN agencies are ready to meet these challenges of the future. Significant programmes are already in place in key areas and we will expand our support when and where required. However, continued funding is an obvious prerequisite. The agencies' own funds are of course available although they are generally limited. In addition, there are earmarked funds from donors for specific programmes or projects. UN agency access to TFET funding may perhaps also be considered. This option may become more relevant as UNTAET reduces its presence thus also decreasing the international support to the Project Management Units (PMUs) within the various divisions of ETTA.

We look to your support in ensuring that the UN agencies will be able to maintain and strengthen our work during the phasing out of UNTAET and in the post-independence period.

I thank you!