

*Mr. Finn Reske-Nielsen on the occasion of the
Presentation of Dili Regional Desk and District Reporters work
Saturday October 27, 2001 at the OCPI Press Centre.*

Good afternoon distinguished guests, members of the media, friends and colleagues.

Ten years ago UNDP announced that you cannot have a famine in a country with an effective press. An effective press brings difficult social problems to light and expands people's ability to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

As many of you are probably aware, the number one priority of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) is to assist governments of developing countries to eradicate poverty. It's a huge task that we try to achieve by improving people's choices. These are vital choices that shape lives because they deal with education, health, employment and government. The media are at the forefront of keeping people informed. That is why we consider you as key partners in the fight against poverty. I am very impressed with the strong focus on community service that is built into the four programmes you produce. Through your service the majority of East Timorese can expect to get information relevant to their lives, particularly through the agriculture programme. This is a fantastic contribution to the development of your nation because you are fighting

poverty by improving people's access to information and thereby increasing their CHOICES.

I must say I am also impressed how quickly the Dili Regional Desk was established. Your coverage of the election period no doubt enhanced UNDP, UNTAET's and OCPI's civic education programme, which was aimed at demystifying the electoral process. By keeping people informed about the facts in their area you also had an influence on ending destructive rumors.

I hope this happy union between UNDP, OCPI and the district journalists will continue and grow stronger. The next election will require as much cooperation and dedication directed towards civic education and public information. I can promise you that UNDP is committed to continuing our efforts to mobilize resources for OCPI and supporting your vital work.

Finally, in my capacity as coordinator of the UN Agencies in East Timor, I'd like to invite you, particularly the district reporters, to support us as well. The activities of the UN agencies are aimed at improving people's lives through creating employment opportunities, rebuilding infrastructure, supporting the return of refugees, improving health

services and many, many more. Our project sites are generally located in rural areas and I am sure there is a wealth of stories out there waiting to be uncovered. On behalf of the UN agency staff, I'd like to say that we'd be more than happy to have you visit.

We hope to see you soon! Thank you.