

*Speech by Finn Reske-Nielsen
At the
National Conference Against Corruption
On
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Good morning Transitional Administrator, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, Inspector General of East Timor, Mr. Mariano Lopes da Cruz, distinguished guests, friends and colleagues.

In 1997 the authors of the Global Human Development Report, published by UNDP, summed up the nature of corruption. They wrote that, “like the blackmailer or the kidnapper corruption makes you pay to end the nuisance it creates: it puts sand in the gears of the Administrative machinery and charges you for its removal”.

For many countries, particularly in the developing world, the cost of removing this sand is often at the expense of basic social services such as education and health. Some people may believe that a little bit of corruption here and a little bit of corruption there, could not impact on a nation so dramatically. I would say to these individuals that they are wrong.

The truth is that even small-scale corruption tirelessly saps the resources of any government and, in addition, it diverts money and opportunities from the majority, and particularly the poor, to the wealthy. The well respected global NGO; *Transparency International*, claims that widespread corruption can cause the growth rate of a country to be substantially lower than that of a similar country, which is not plagued by this type of fraud.

East Timor today is one of the world's poorest nations. Therefore it is a nation that cannot afford corruption. It is no secret that in the past corruption has clogged the Administrative machinery of East Timor. Given this history, it is important to ensure that rules and regulations to stop corruption are established and enforced. However, these rules and regulations will have little impact if people's attitudes and working norms fail to change. Therefore I am pleased to see representatives from civil society participating in this conference over the next two days. You and your organizations can play a key role in creating awareness about the devastating impact of corruption. Civil society around the world also plays a key watchdog role, guarding against all forms of corruption in many spheres of public life. I hope you will take on this vital task for the East Timorese.

UNDP is committed to fighting corruption with you, by supporting initiatives that promote better public service management and transparency. Therefore we are pleased to be supporting conferences such as this. We have also made a commitment to support the strengthening of the Inspector General's Office and we are also working with customs and border services. All of these initiatives have one aim and that is to work, under the leadership of the Government and in collaboration with our partners, to support the sustainable development of East Timor today and after independence.

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