

MEDIA RELEASE

5 June, 2001

For Immediate Release

JUNE 8: Official Launch

East Timor's first environment report exposes eight serious risks

According to the UN Development Programme (UNDP), it is the world's poor who are most affected by damage to the environment, with 800 million people undernourished and 5 million dying each year because of polluted water, lack of sanitation, and waterborne diseases alone. The problem is often exacerbated by economic and political systems that encourage exploitation of ecosystems for short-term gain, such as subsidies for water, fossil fuels and pesticides. East Timor will have to balance development with environmental protection if the world's newest nation is to avoid repeating the mistakes of other countries.

UNDP has been working with the Transitional Administration to provide clear policy direction on environment management and the sustainable use of natural resources in East Timor. As a result, the first comprehensive assessment of environmental concerns and issues in East Timor was recently presented to Cabinet and will be officially launched on **Friday June 8, 2001**.

The assessment, which was funded by the Government of Norway, has taken four months and involved hundreds of consultations engaging local communities, ETTA, NGOs, the private sector and donor agencies.

Ten environmental concerns have been identified in the assessment for urgent action. These include the development of national regulation in support of traditional law and helping rural communities better manage their resources. In urban areas, particularly in Dili, lack of adequate solid waste management, pollution from sewerage and commercial activities and contamination of soil and water from poor handling of fuel and oil pose serious environmental risks, the assessment claimed.

The assessment findings will be presented during a breakfast on June 8, 2001 hosted by UNDP and UNTAET. **All media are invited.** The breakfast starts at 7.30am in the Garden of the Turismo Hotel. Special guests, the SRSG, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello and the UNDP Representative, Mr. Finn Reske-Nielsen, will give brief addresses. Representatives from the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) of UNTAET will present the assessment findings. Copies of the translated executive summaries will be distributed.

ENDS....

The UNDP has been working in East Timor since 1999 to support the Transitional Administration rebuild government institutions, reduce poverty, and help communities bridge the gap between emergency relief and development.

For Further Information please contact information officer LISA Hiller on:

Email: lisa.hiller@undp.org

Phone: (61) 040 8834691