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### UN AGENCIES DISCUSS RENEWED EFFORTS FOR POVERTY REDUCTION, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION

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The leaders of the UN agencies this week held a special two-day meeting to discuss how they can better assist the government to meet the national development goals, particularly poverty reduction and significant improvements in education and health care.

In recent years, leaders of more than 180 countries agreed on a basic set of development goals and targets aiming to fight income poverty, hunger, diseases such as HIV and Malaria, maternal and infant mortality, a lack of adequate shelter and exclusion – while promoting gender equality, education for all, and environmental sustainability. They agreed on eight objectives, called the Millennium Development Goals.

In Timor-Leste, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are intrinsically linked to the national goals outlined in the National Development Plan. The UN Agencies and other development partners work in their specific areas of expertise to support the work of the government towards the attainment of these goals.

In education, for example, UN Agencies in Timor-Leste pledged to assist the Government in increasing the proportion of boys and girls aged 6-10 enrolled in primary school from 75% to 80%, complemented by reducing the repetition rate from 20% to 15% and the proportion of dropouts from 10% to 8%. In health, the commitment was made to increase the number of people with access to clean water to 80% in urban areas and 60% in rural areas, and access to sanitation to 55% in urban areas and 25% in rural areas.

These goals mirror the commitment by the UN Agencies to supporting the government in meeting the objectives in the National Development Plan, and ultimately contributing to the Millennium Development Goals.

As United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in his speech delivered at St. Paul's Cathedral in London earlier this month, we have reached a make-or-break moment for the MDGs and for the poor people throughout the world. If the current trends persist, many of the poorest countries including Timor-Leste will not be able to meet many of the MDG goals by 2015.



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Progress on achieving the MDGs will be reviewed at the world's largest UN summit ever in September. Both President Xanana Gusmao and Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri are expected to participate in the Summit to present an assessment of the prospects for Timor-Leste to achieve the goals by 2015.

In his opening address to the Heads of the UN Agencies, United Nations Resident Coordinator Dr Sukehiro Hasegawa called for renewed emphasis on attaining the MDG goals in Timor-Leste. "At this critical time, more efforts, money and resources need to be committed in the areas of education, health and poverty alleviation. This is particularly important in the development of rural areas and in employment generation. Without a significant increase in these areas, Timor-Leste will fall short of the targets set for 2015." He warned.

"For UN Agencies, it is imperative that we revisit our goals and targets, looking not *just* at the targets, but also at *how* we as the UN country team can help achieve these goals. We should then ask what our roles should be, and how we can help the government and the people of Timor-Leste achieve these targets in line with their National Development Plan and the Millennium Development Goals." Said Dr. Hasegawa.