

## By UNMISSET Spokesperson's Office

**Dili, 18 June 2003.**

### **Flooding update: two people dead, many displaced persons return to their homes**

The body of the missing UNDP project staff has been recovered this afternoon, bringing the death toll from the floods in the southern districts to two. Two people are still missing in Manufahi district.

It is still raining in Cova Lima but the floods have subsided and many displaced people have returned to their homes. An UN team has visited Suai, and said that there are now just over 200 people still being sheltered by PKF in two locations. These too should be able to return to their villages soon. But wells did get flooded and people are being warned not to drink the water. WHO and PKF have taken an initial 700 water purification tablets to the area and are hoping to get more in tomorrow. PKF will also take portable water testing kits.

Most roads in the flood hit areas are still impassable but PKF teams have begun a damage survey by road today from both Suai and Dili. Flying conditions have also eased, allowing PKF engineers to conduct aerial assessments as well.

Earlier today, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Timor-Leste, Mr Sukehiro Hasegawa, held an emergency disaster response coordination meeting with the Acting Prime Minister, Ana Pessoa, the Ministers of Health [Rui de Araújo] and Interior [Rogério Lobato], and UN agencies in Timor-Leste.

This morning's meeting also considered longer-term concerns, including the risk of food shortages. Drought in the earlier part of the year and smaller yields of some crops had already led the FAO and the WFP to issue a food warning recently, saying that some 14,000 tonnes of food relief could be needed from October until March next year. There is a risk that the flood damage to crops, and the loss of livestock will compound the problem. Some villages have lost their entire crop. But in Suai the damage may not be as extensive as first thought, according to the UN team there today. Crops appear to be still standing but mud and water damage assessments have not yet been carried out.

On Friday morning, there will be another top-level disaster response coordination meeting to review the situation.

