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RDTL GOVERNMENT AND UNMISSET AGREE CONTINUED DEPLOYMENT OF F-FDTL IN ERMERA

(Dili, 1 February) – The RDTL government and UNMISSET have agreed to extend the temporary hand-over of defence responsibilities in the Ermera sub-districts of Atsabe and Hatolia to the F-FDTL for a further period of 2 weeks. Following the agreement reached in the wake of the murders in Atsabe early last month, responsibility for the defence in the district had been handed over by PKF to the F-FDTL on a temporary basis. The F-FDTL was due to hand responsibility back to PKF yesterday afternoon. But the F-FDTL Commander Brigadier-General Taur Matan Ruak and the PKF Commander General Tan have now extended their earlier agreement for another two weeks.

Community leaders and residents of both sub-districts had made strong pleas for the F-FDTL to remain in the area. They also put forward their request to the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Timor-Leste, Mr Sukehiro Hasegawa, who travelled to Hatolia and Atsabe over the last couple of days to meet with residents and hear their concerns.

At both meetings, the DSRSG stressed that Timor-Leste was a fully independent and sovereign country and it was up to its people and government to decide how best to maintain security, adding that UNMISSET was of course ready to assist in whatever manner necessary. Mr Hasegawa told residents that he would take the views of both communities to Prime-Minister Mari Alkatiri and to RDTL President Xanana Gusmão, the Commander-in-Chief of F-FDTL. “If you and your government want the F-FDTL to stay here then the UN is ready to consider such request”, Mr Hasegawa told Atsabe residents yesterday.

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