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SRSG Hasegawa stresses the importance of the inseparable role of law and language in Timor-Leste's justice system

6 October 2004: In thanking the Government of Portugal for its \$1.2-million assistance aimed at strengthening Timor-Leste's justice sector, the Head of the United Nations in the country stressed the importance of the inseparable role of law and language for legal experts.

Speaking at yesterday's signing ceremony, Dr Sukehiro Hasegawa, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Timor-Leste, stated that the support received from donor countries, such as Portugal, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Australia and Ireland, is in recognition of the important mission that judges, prosecutors and public defenders undertake in guaranteeing the rule of law as well as providing stability for Timor-Leste and its people.

The SRSG added that in order for these professionals to ensure justice and fairness, they must be experts in both law and language.

"It's not a question of using Tetum or Portuguese that matters but is more a question of acquiring the knowledge of both languages in order to be a practitioner of law in Timor-Leste," said Dr Hasegawa

Whilst advising the law practitioners to learn Portuguese as a matter of urgency and further develop their Tetum, the SRSG also encouraged them to retain their knowledge of Indonesian and learn English.

On the role of international judges in Timor-Leste, Dr Hasegawa stressed that they are deployed by UNMISET to give as much legal assistance as possible and will only remain in the country until the end of UNMISET's mandate on 20 May 2005.

He urged national law practitioners to "capture the opportunity" and acquire the knowledge and linguistic competency as soon as possible in order for international judges to be relinquished of their responsibilities.