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United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor

## UNMISSET PRESS RELEASE

### *Conference on Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration: Calls for concerted effort to curb corruption and for 'change of mindset'*

(Dili, 13 November) – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Timor-Leste, Ambassador Kamallesh Sharma, today warned against the consequences of corruption and highlighted the importance of open and transparent governance in the development process. “In some countries it has been apparent that corruption has hindered development of the state, leaving as victims in its wake the citizens, institutions and democratic processes in those countries”. On the other hand, “good, clean governance and adherence to the rule of law can play an important role in promoting stable economic, social and political environments”, said the SRSG. He was speaking at the start of a two-day conference on Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration organised by the RDTL government with support from UNMISSET and UNDP which opened this morning in Dili.

The SRSG acknowledged the progress already made by Timor-Leste in this area but also recognised that “sustained attention against corruption and the continuing encouragement for transparency and accountability within public administration are inevitable for ongoing development in Timor-Leste”. He called too for a broad-based approach and for international cooperation which in today’s increasingly interdependent world could be a powerful tool in taking effective measures to curb corruption.

The RDTL President Xanana Gusmão for his part said that the government is showing that it is committed to tackle corruption and nepotism but it is also necessary for people to change their mindset. He recalled that for 24 years the Timorese witnessed the practice of ‘KKN’ [corruption and nepotism] in public administration and for this reason jettisoning the old habits will not be an easy task. But he listed the different forms corruption can take and the effects it can have in all areas, from the government and the courts to customs and police officers, and stressed the need for change. Xanana Gusmão also stressed the need for prevention and sanction mechanisms.

Over the next couple of days, government representatives led by the Prime-Minister and senior Ministers, members of the judiciary and NGO and civil society representatives will join international experts from Transparency International, Interpol, the World and Asia Development Banks, country specialists from New Zealand, Sweden, Singapore, among others,

to discuss individual country experiences, oversight policy and mechanisms, access to official information and the role of the media, and how development partners can help reduce corruption.

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