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United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor

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RDTL President tells UNMISSET: ‘You are our brothers’

(Dili, 17 May) – The RDTL President Xanana Gusmão last night thanked UNMISSET personnel for their personal commitment to the Timorese cause and paid tribute to those peacekeepers who lost their lives in the cause of peace while serving in Timor-Leste. He mentioned the civilian advisors who work with the government, saying that they all witness their daily trials and tribulations. “To us you are more than colleagues, you are our brothers”. Xanana Gusmão was speaking during the cultural event organised by UNMISSET as part of the celebrations to mark the first anniversary of the restoration of independence.

Government ministers, diplomats and other guests joined hundreds of UNMISSET personnel at UNMISSET’s main compound in Dili, the *Obrigado* Barracks, for an international food fair and a cultural display that lasted over four hours. Civilian, police and military personnel organised food stalls offering typical fare from over a dozen of the nationalities represented in UNMISSET.

After dinner, UNMISSET people from some 16 countries made cultural presentations. Australia and Portugal each presented sketches illustrating their country’s history. There was dance from Pakistan, Fiji, Nepal, Samoa, Thailand, the Philippines and Timor-Leste, songs from Zambia and China, Japanese drums, a *capoeira* [Afro-Brazilian martial art] display by the Brazilians and an impressive martial arts exhibition by members of the Republic of Korea’s Special Forces. One of the most popular presentations was a traditional ‘lion dance’ from Singapore.

To cap the evening, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Timor-Leste, Ambassador Kamallesh Sharma, led UNMISSET’s senior management team in a choir rendition of a Timorese song.

The celebrations continued this afternoon, with the SRSG and the RDTL President leading teams of UNMISSET’s senior management and the RDTL cabinet in a friendly 15-minute soccer match at Dili’s stadium, ahead of the final of the football tournament organised by the government as part of the celebrations. Before the friendly, Xanana Gusmão received a donation of 1,200 balls from Thailand, and commented that he hoped his team would beat UNMISSET’s. He wasn’t disappointed when they duly beat the UNMISSET team by 2-1 to the delight of the packed stadium. UNMISSET too had reason to be pleased: hours earlier, a team of UNMISSET personnel beat a Timorese team 2-0 in the afternoon’s first friendly.

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