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SRSG addresses PNTL institutional capacity-building workshop: 'A LANDMARK EVENT IN DEFINING THE FUTURE OF PNTL'

(Dili, 22 April) – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Timor-Leste, Ambassador Kamallesh Sharma, described the workshop on the institutional capacity-building of the PNTL [Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste] that opened in Dili this morning as a “landmark event in defining the future of PNTL. The SRSG added that developing a democratic police force in accordance with internationally acceptable standards and principles of policing and human rights is a long-term endeavour, and is essential to socio-economic and political progress, as well as to stability, in Timor-Leste.

Over 150 people are taking part in the 2-day workshop that is a key step in the process of strengthening the PNTL as an institution. Institution- and capacity-building in the four key areas of policy development, management, human resources development and community policing was the over-arching recommendation of the Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) by the RDTL government, UNMISSET, UNDP and development partners that assessed the needs of the PNTL [November 2002].

The importance that the RDTL government attaches to the development of the police is reflected in the high level participation in the workshop. Prime-Minister Mari Alkatiri opened the event, saying that security and law and order is a major issue for the government and all organs of state, as well as for civil society, the public and the international community. Japan is funding the workshop, and Ambassadors and other senior diplomats are playing an active role in the workshop.

The RDTL President Xanana Gusmão also addressed participants, calling upon police not to attempt to maintain law and order by force alone, and to earn the trust and respect of the community. “[one] cannot impose law and order by abusing, punching or mistreating people: law and order are established with the realization [by the public] that social relationships are governed for the benefit of society as a whole”, said the President. He urged police not to succumb to the lure of bribery and corruption, and called on the public for their part to overcome

the “aversion” to the police that stemmed from their past experience of an “oppressive and corrupt police force”.

One of the key aspects of the workshop is the involvement of representatives from civil society, including Human Rights and other NGOs, the Church and the media working alongside the leadership and officers of the PNTL in groups that will look into specific issues relating to the four broad themes identified in the JAM report. UNPOL is also playing a leading role, with UNPOL Acting Commissioner, Denis McDermott, and all of UNPOL senior management lending key support and expertise to the groups.

Before the workshop broke into the working groups, the Minister of the Interior, Rogerio Lobato, and the PNTL Commissioner Paulo Martins outlined their strategic vision for the police. Rogerio Lobato stressed the need for an impartial force that respects human rights, serves the public interest and works in partnership with the community. The PNTL Commissioner concluded the opening session by reminding participants that a professional, impartial police force, based on the principles of justice and respect for human dignity and human rights is an essential pillar for the development of a democratic society in Timor-Leste.

For further information contact:

Marcia Poole

Spokesperson/UNMISSET

Mobile: + 670 723 0793

Telephone: + 61 8 8946 3900 Ext. 6059