

## **By UNMISSET Spokesperson's Office**

**Dili, 11 July 2002**

### **SRSR DISCUSSES AID COOPERATION WITH MINISTER**

SRSR Kamallesh Sharma today met with East Timor's Acting Foreign Minister, Jorge Teme, to continue discussions on how the UN can enhance technical cooperation between East Timor and other countries.

Teme said that substantial offers of assistance have been made by both developed and developing countries including the UK, the US, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Indonesia, India, Senegal, Algeria, Brazil and other countries in Latin America.

The Acting Foreign Minister particularly praised Japan for promoting trilateral cooperation resulting in East Timorese being trained in a third country with Japanese funds.

The SRSR and Teme discussed how the UN and UNDP can continue to work to ensure that gaps in human resource development are filled, and how UNMISSET can facilitate and encourage other countries to provide assistance in these areas. It was decided that contact would continue to be maintained for this purpose.

This afternoon the SRSR visited the Japanese Engineering Group (JEG) headquarters in Dili where he familiarised himself with the JEG's activities and praised its members for their professionalism and work to date.

### **RECONCILIATION COMMISSION COMPLETES PILOT PROJECTS**

East Timor's Commission on Reception, Truth and Reconciliation has completed two pilot projects taking voluntary statements from victims of human rights abuses between 1974 and 1999 on the island of Atauro off Dili.

The violations described in the 33 collected statements include murder, torture, rape and forced displacement.

The Commission visited Atauro as part of its mandate to inquire into politically-related human rights violations in East Timor between 1974 and 1999. Thousands of political prisoners were allegedly deported to the island during Indonesia's regime in East Timor.

Meanwhile, the Commission last week completed training for 70 new staff who have since been deployed to the districts of Dili, Liquica, Baucau, Manatuto, Viqueque, Lospalos and Oecussi. Assisted by the National Commissioners, the staff and Regional Commissioners have now commenced a three-week socialisation and consultation programme in these districts to inform communities about the Commission's work and to learn from the communities about what issues they wish the Commission to address.



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## **UNHCR CLARIFIES ISSUE OF SEPARATED EAST TIMORESE CHILDREN**

The UNHCR office in East Timor has issued a statement clarifying a local media report containing incorrect information on the issue of East Timorese children separated from their parents during and after the tumultuous events of 1999.

The UNHCR estimates that 1,910 East Timorese children remain separated from their parents. However, ongoing efforts to reconfirm this figure have been hampered by difficulties including the incomplete addresses or unknown whereabouts of parents; the modification of some children's names; and the difficulty of accessing institutions in Indonesia where the separated children are allegedly staying.

The 1,910 estimate is comprised of 821 East Timorese children in West Timor whose parents are either elsewhere in Indonesia or in East Timor; 504 East Timorese children in East Timor whose parents are in Indonesia; 148 children who are with private caretakers in Indonesia; and 437 children who are staying with various foundations in Indonesia.

The reasons for cases of separation are various and complex. Some parents who were in particularly dangerous and difficult situations during the violence of 1999 and its aftermath put their children into the temporary custody of relatives and close friends. Other parents lost sight of their children while fleeing the chaos. In some cases children got separated in West Timor when their struggling families put them into the care of individuals and organizations that offered proper education and food.

However many of these parents have now returned to East Timor and would like to reconnect with children they have often not received information about for more than two years.

The UNHCR continues to work with the Indonesian government in order to gain access to locations where the children are believed to reside, and once this occurs it will be easier to ascertain if the reunification of children with their parents is possible or preferable. Difficulties remain in reunifying children on islands other than Timor or of children with caretakers who refuse to let them return to their parents, but the UNHCR and the Indonesian Government remain committed to resolving the issue.



# **MEDIA BRIEFING NOTE**

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