

MEDIA BRIEFING NOTE

By UNMISSET Spokesperson's Office

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Dili, 21 August 2002

Attention of UNMISSET has been drawn to the report by Lusa of 19 August regarding the escape of inmates of Becora CDC. UNMISSET would like to stress that its mission is that of supporting Timor Leste in the early period after independence. The main elements of the mandate of UNMISSET are:

To provide assistance to core administrative structures critical to the viability and political stability of East Timor;

To provide interim law enforcement and public security and to assist in the development of a new law enforcement agency in East Timor, the East Timor Police Service (ETPS); and

To contribute to the maintenance of the external and internal security of East Timor.

The UN Security Council also requested UNMISSET to give full effect to the three Programmes of the Mandate Implementation Plan as set out in section III A 3 of the Report of the Secretary-General of 17 April 2002 namely, Stability, Democracy and Justice; Public Security and Law Enforcement; and External Security and Border Control.

All actions of UNMISSET are undertaken in full conformity with its mandate. It is totally misleading and baseless to allege, as the source quoted by Lusa suggests, that UNMISSET is pressing for recruitment of judges with any particular nationality or linguistic background. Appointment of judges is the prerogative of the Government of Timor Leste on criteria it finds satisfactory. The use of any particular language or another is the prerogative of the national state concerned, and fully respected by the United Nations. Indeed, where the United Nations is providing advisors to the Government, it has, on its request, actively sought out Portuguese speakers.

It may be useful to point out that, in conformity with the official languages of the Constitution of Timor Leste, UNMISSET has accorded due recognition to the use of Tetum. To give but one example, the Certificate on Transfer of Defence Responsibility for the Lautem District Area of Operation, the first such agreement to be concluded between the Government and UNMISSET, after the independence of Timor Leste, was concluded both in Tetum and in English (which is one of the official working languages of the United Nations). Special Representative of the Secretary General has also made a practice of delivering all public statements in Tetum. Perhaps, the readers of Lusa would benefit from an awareness of these significant steps taken by UNMISSET in pursuance of Government decisions.



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UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VISITS EAST TIMOR

Mary Robinson, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will visit East Timor from 23 to 25 August 2002. The High Commissioner is making the visit, her last as High Commissioner, to convey support to the new State and to encourage continued high priority to building a human rights infrastructure.

During her visit, the High Commissioner will meet with the President Xanana Gusmao, the Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, the President of the Parliament Francisco (Lu Olo) Guterres the Senior Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Mr Jose Ramos-Horta and a number of other senior government officials, lawyers, non-governmental organisations, community leaders and women leaders.

Among other highlights of the High Commissioner's visit, Mrs Robinson will address the National Parliament, sign a communique on human rights with the government and civil society, and witness the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation's first community reconciliation process. It is significant that the High Commissioner will return to Suai where she visited in 2000 and met the survivors of the 1999 violence there. She will also plant a tree in memory of those killed in the massacre at Santa Cruz cemetery in 1991.

Mrs Robinson has long supported the people of East Timor in their struggle for independence. Her term as High Commissioner for Human Rights ends on 11 September. The next High Commissioner for Human Rights will be former Transitional Administrator and Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Sergio Vieira de Mello.

For more information regarding this visit, please contact the UNMISSET Public Information Office on mobile 0417 868 485. Ext: 6267/5229

