

By UNMISSET Spokesperson's Office

Dili, 24 October 2002

TIMOR-LESTE CELEBRATES FIRST UN DAY AS MEMBER NATION

Timor-Leste, the United Nation's newest member nation celebrated UN Day 2002 with a seminar and a live TV and Radio debate on UN issues, a children's essay contest and other programmes and activities.

At a UN Day Seminar, "Timor-Leste's Membership in the United Nations – Challenges and Opportunities," which was held at the Dili Hotel, the Special Representative for the Secretary General (SRSG) Kamallesh Sharma delivered special greetings from the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan. Mr. Sharma said, "Today must be a day of pride for the people of Timor-Leste on regaining your lost identity and nationhood and finding an honoured place within the world community."

The SRSG also praised those members and staff of the United Nations and other members of the world community who played a role in helping Timor-Leste become the 191st UN member.

Mr. Sharma cited the obligations and responsibilities that come with being a UN member and upholding the UN charter. He said he was "convinced that Timor-Leste would contribute to the achievement of all these UN aims and aspirations with commitment and conviction."

Xanana Gusmão, the President of Timor-Leste, gave the keynote address at the UN seminar saying that "Timor-Leste was the newest member of the United Nations but was not new to the ideals" of the world organisation. President Gusmão said that on agreeing to be a member of the United Nations, the people of Timor-Leste have taken on the burden and the privileges of fulfilling the UN's principles. He said that, perhaps the greatest contribution that Timor-Leste can make to the United Nations is the model of its own history and experience of "solving problems through peaceful means."

In his address to the UN Day Seminar Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Jose Ramos Horta thanked the UN for its long involvement in his country saying "the mere presence of the United Nations here has a positive psychological value" for the Timorese who have been through so much. He praised the exceptional partnership that has evolved between Timor Leste and the United Nations.

The Foreign Affairs Minister added that the people of Timor-Leste had learned about the importance of human rights through their years of having an absence of human rights. He chided the Parliament and Government of Timor-Leste for their slowness in ratifying a range of UN human rights instruments including the Declaration on



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Children's Rights and the Conventions on Refugees and on Discrimination Against Women. He challenged the Parliament to discuss and ratify these UN conventions by

December 10th, International Human Rights Day, saying, "If they are not ratified, I, as Foreign Minister, will not defend the indefensible."

