

USG/ERC John Holmes

Statement at Donor Briefing on Timor-Leste Humanitarian Situation

22 January 2008

Your Excellency Mr. Deputy Prime Minister of Timor-Leste

Excellencies, representatives of Member States

Mr. Finn Reske-Nielsen, DSRSG/HC/RC

Distinguished colleagues and humanitarian partners

Ladies and gentlemen

I am pleased to welcome you to this briefing on the humanitarian situation in Timor-Leste, which continues to be of concern nearly two years after violence erupted in Dili. Despite concerted efforts by the Government and the international community, which need to be stepped up further, 100,000 people are still displaced. Timor-Leste also remains a poor country, prone to cycles of flooding and drought that result in persistent food insecurity. Today, our aim is to explain how we can help Timor-Leste address and remove the lingering effects of the violence of 2006 and return to the work of development that benefits all of her people.

The Government of Timor-Leste, together with the support of the civil society and the international community, has two essential and inter-linked challenges:

1. Tackling the IDP situation by continuing life-saving humanitarian assistance in the camps in a targeted manner, but urgently working to remove the problems which keep people in the camps thus creating recovery opportunities.
2. Addressing other chronic vulnerabilities in the country that have a direct humanitarian impact on the overall Timorese population.

The specific humanitarian needs related to the IDP situation can be summed up in four main sectors: 1) shelter, 2) food; 3) water/sanitation and health; 4) protection and security.

As you are aware, the United Nations and its partners provided emergency assistance to the affected populations of Timor-Leste after the crisis in April-May 2006. An immediate flash appeal for USD 18 million was launched to meet the needs of the affected populations. Donors responded generously, contributing 114% of the amount requested. After a deterioration of the situation, a subsequent appeal for USD 36 million was issued to implement activities ranging from food aid to camp management. This appeal attracted 61 percent of the requirements.

OCHA remains committed to supporting the Government and all its partners in the transition we all urgently want to see from relief to early recovery and development. In this context, we look forward to hearing from Ambassador Kumalo of South Africa who led a Security Council mission to Timor-Leste at the end of November 2007.

It is also important that the Timorese government has initiated the development of a National Recovery Strategy. I would like to welcome the Deputy Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, H.E. Mr. Jose Luis Guterres, who will present the beginnings of this plan to us today.

Mr. Finn Reske-Nielsen, the DSRSG/RC/HC for Timor-Leste, under whose leadership the humanitarian partners have provided assistance to the vulnerable population in Timor-Leste, especially to the Internally Displaced Persons that comprise 10% of the population, will brief you on what the UN and NGO partners will do to support the government's efforts in this regard.

Finally, we will hear from Ms. Kathleen Cravero of the United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, on plans for helping Timor to move away from short-term emergency assistance to longer-term, development programmes.