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## Fifth Committee

### Summary record of the 60th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 24 May 1999, at 3 p.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. Abelian ..... (Armenia)  
*Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative  
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Mselle

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Agenda item 113: Programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999** (*continued*)

*Question of East Timor* (A/53/7/Add.13;  
A/C.5/53/61)

1. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the question of East Timor (A/53/7/Add.13), stressed that the recommendation contained in the report was a preliminary one: the Advisory Committee had not yet considered the budget estimates for a United Nations mission in East Timor, and any final recommendation could come only after the Secretary-General had submitted a revised budget. That in turn could occur only after the Security Council had formally authorized the mission.

2. As a result of information given to it by representatives of the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of commitment authority of \$35 million, a sum greater than the \$25.4 million in commitment authority requested by the Secretary-General in paragraph 8 of his report (A/C.5/53/61). Also, the Advisory Committee had noted that expenditures of Trust Fund resources were contemplated, but was of the view that it was important to show the full budget and to have authority from the General Assembly to spend it regardless of the source of financing.

3. Paragraph 8 of Security Council resolution 1236 (1999) requested the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council and to make detailed recommendations on, *inter alia*, the budget of a United Nations mission in East Timor. In that connection, he drew attention to paragraph 4 of the Advisory Committee report, which recalled General Assembly resolution 45/248 reaffirming the role of the Fifth Committee in administrative and budgetary matters.

4. **Mr. Stein** (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and, in addition, Iceland and Liechtenstein, concurred with the recommendation of the Advisory Committee to grant the Secretary-General commitment authority of \$35 million.

5. He expressed the Union's support for all efforts to bring peace to East Timor and commended the Secretary-General on his sustained efforts to find a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution, which had culminated in the signing of the Agreements on the future of East Timor on

5 May 1999 by the Secretary-General and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia and Portugal. As security would be crucial for a free and fair ballot on 8 August 1999 and for an orderly and peaceful transition, the Secretary-General must be enabled to take action immediately.

6. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), also supported the recommendation to approve commitment authority of \$35 million: the Association attached great importance to ensuring that adequate funds were available to enable the Secretary-General to fulfil the responsibilities entrusted to him by the parties to the Agreements of 5 May 1999.

7. **Ms. Merchant** (Norway) said that her delegation concurred with the Advisory Committee's recommendation to approve commitment authority of \$35 million, pending further action by the Security Council and the submission by the Secretary-General of a revised budget, because it was important for the Secretary-General to be able to proceed without delay.

8. Her Government supported the establishment of a civilian United Nations presence in East Timor and had contributed \$500,000 to the Trust Fund for that purpose.

9. The signature of the Agreements of 5 May 1999 was an important landmark on the path to a peaceful and orderly resolution of the East Timor issue and she commended the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative on their efforts to secure the Agreements.

10. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation to grant the Secretary-General commitment authority of \$35 million for a United Nations mission in East Timor on the understanding that the amount would be committed from all sources of funding, including voluntary contributions, and that all expenses incurred for the mission would be met through voluntary contributions. He announced that his Government had pledged an initial voluntary contribution of \$6.5 million and hoped to pledge more.

11. His delegation's endorsement of the mission came with the expectation that it would be carried out with the strongest management controls and in full compliance with applicable regulations and rules, and with the hope that it would be successful.

12. **Mr. Oratmangun** (Indonesia) reaffirmed his delegation's support for the position expressed by the representative of the Philippines speaking on behalf of ASEAN. Granting the Secretary-General commitment authority of \$35 million would enable him to complete all the

steps leading to the implementation of the Agreements of 5 May 1999.

13. The signing of the Agreements on East Timor by the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal, through the good offices of the Secretary-General, had been the culmination of 16 years of negotiations spanning the terms of three United Nations Secretaries-General, and was regarded by his Government as a development of profound significance consequent on a series of bold and innovative initiatives by President Habibie.

14. His Government believed that it was critically important for the Agreements to be implemented in full in order to achieve a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor. It therefore welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General and his staff to establish a United Nations presence in East Timor as early as possible to assist in implementing the Agreements. In that connection he called on the Committee to support the Agreements by providing financial support for the United Nations role. He called also on Member States to increase their support in order to expedite the process in East Timor, which included a number of complex, technical and time-consuming measures.

15. He stressed that the mandate, size and structure of the United Nations presence in East Timor should be in compliance with the Agreements that had already been reached between the two Governments and the United Nations.

16. **Mr. Armitage** (Australia) said that his delegation attached great importance to a resolution of the question of East Timor and welcomed the signing of the Agreements of 5 May 1999 as a crucial step towards that end. His delegation therefore supported granting the Secretary-General commitment authority as recommended by the Advisory Committee.

17. In that connection he announced that his Government was prepared to grant extensive support to ensure the effective and timely deployment of a United Nations mission in East Timor. In addition to providing 10 million Australian dollars (approximately US\$ 6.5 million) as a cash contribution, it was prepared to spend an additional \$A 11.78 million (over US\$ 7.5 million) in kind. In that connection, he requested the Secretariat to update the figure for Australia's in-kind contribution given in document A/C.5/53/61.

18. **The Chairman** replied that the Secretariat had taken note of Australia's increased in-kind contribution and would update document A/C.5/53/61 accordingly.

19. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that her delegation shared the preoccupation expressed by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee in respect of paragraph 8 of Security Council resolution 1236 (1999) and supported the position expressed in General Assembly resolution 45/248 reaffirming the primacy of the Fifth Committee in administrative and budgetary matters. The matter was of such importance that it must be reflected in any decision which the Committee might take on the matter.

20. Her delegation had noted that the Advisory Committee had not studied the budget contained in the report of the Secretary-General pending the submission of a revised budget for the mission. It had noted also the Advisory Committee's recommendation for the approval of commitment authority of \$35 million and in particular its statement that the ultimate mode of financing would be decided upon by the General Assembly.

21. **Ms. Sun Minging** (China) supported the recommendation of the Advisory Committee that the Secretary-General should be granted authority to commit \$35 million for the initial requirements of a United Nations mission in East Timor. Her delegation welcomed the Agreements which had been achieved, with the good offices of the Secretary-General, between Indonesia and Portugal on the autonomy of East Timor: the Agreements were in the interests not only of the parties concerned but also of peace and stability in the region as a whole. United Nations personnel should therefore be sent to East Timor as soon as possible.

22. **Ms. Powles** (New Zealand) expressed her delegation's agreement with the positions expressed by previous speakers, and by the representative of Indonesia in particular, that the Secretary-General should be granted commitment authority of \$35 million.

23. Her delegation supported the urgent and challenging preparations being undertaken by the Secretary-General to implement the Agreements of 5 May 1999 between the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal. New Zealand had contributed \$200,000 to the Trust Fund and was seeking to provide 10 civilian police officers for the United Nations presence in East Timor.

24. **Ms. Emerson** (Portugal) expressed her delegation's satisfaction that all previous speakers had supported the rapid launching of a United Nations presence in East Timor.

25. **The Chairman** suggested that the Committee should wait until it reviewed the revised budget to be submitted by the Secretary-General before examining the issues raised in

connection with paragraph 8 of Security Council resolution 1236 (1999).

26. He suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly the following draft decision:

*“The General Assembly*

*“Decides to authorize the Secretary-General to enter into commitment up to \$35 million, from all sources of funds, for the initial requirements of the United Nations activities related to East Timor, pending further action by the Security Council and the submission of a revised budget by the Secretary-General.”*

27. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that her delegation could support the draft decision only if it contained a reference to the issue raised in paragraph 4 of the report of the Advisory Committee and to the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 45/248. Indeed, the wording of paragraph 4 could be adapted to form part of the Committee’s draft decision.

28. **The Chairman** proposed the following wording for addition, as a separate paragraph, to the draft decision:

*“Reaffirms its resolution 45/248 of 21 December 1990, which reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters and expressed concern at the tendency of its substantive Committees and other intergovernmental bodies to involve themselves in administrative and budgetary matters.”*

29. *The draft decision, as orally revised, was adopted.*

#### **Other matters**

30. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) pointed out that in the Spanish text of document A/C.5/53/61 the last part of the first sentence of paragraph 7 did not accurately reflect the meaning of the original English and asked the Secretariat to ensure that the Spanish text was aligned on the English and a corrigendum issued. She stressed that poor quality of documentation was unacceptable and emphasized that her delegation and others had on previous occasions expressed concern about the practice of self-revision.

31. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said that the quest for efficiency should not be allowed to affect product quality. He agreed that the quality of drafting in document A/C.5/53/61 was poor in that it contained avoidable mistakes.

32. **The Chairman** said that a corrigendum for the Spanish text would be issued and the points raised by the two previous

speakers would be conveyed to the appropriate departments. He suggested that members should perhaps temper their expectations given that the document in question had been prepared at very short notice.

*The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.*