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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF
INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1488th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 30 June 1998, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:

Mr. RODRÍGUEZ PARRILLA
(Acting Chairman)

(Cuba)

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REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

1. The agenda was adopted.

QUESTION OF WESTERN SAHARA

2. The CHAIRMAN said that, at its 1487th meeting, the Special Committee had acceded to the petitioner's request for a hearing.

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Said (Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO)) took a place at the petitioners' table.

4. Mr. SAID (Frente POLISARIO) said that the direct talks between the Frente POLISARIO and the Kingdom of Morocco, held under the auspices of Mr. James Baker III, the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, had led to the signing of the Houston agreements, which provided for the identification of applicants for participation in the referendum, the return of refugees, the deployment of troops and the adoption of a code of conduct. The international community, and the Saharan people in particular, had greeted the conclusion of those agreements with optimism. Although the identification process had been resumed on 3 December 1997, Morocco had begun to create all sorts of obstacles, refusing to agree to the timetable for identification proposed by the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and attempting to impose its own conditions.

5. The Government of Morocco had assembled individuals who had not been registered by MINURSO and sent them to the identification centre at Laayoune, in violation of the Houston agreements. Trying the patience of the international community, Morocco was taking advantage of an opportunity to hamper the identification process on various pretexts. In particular, Morocco's opposition to the opening of an identification centre in Nouadhibou, Mauritania, where there was a large Saharan community, had delayed that process.

6. Morocco's mass media campaign against MINURSO was further proof of its intention to resort to a policy of blackmail in order to influence the implementation of the settlement plan.

7. In response to Security Council resolution 1163 (1998) of 17 April 1998, the Governments of Sweden and Pakistan had sent engineering units to the Territory to provide assistance in mine clearance. However, Morocco had not allowed the aircraft with the Swedish engineers to land in Laayoune, and the aircraft had been forced to land in the Canary Islands. When the unit arrived in Laayoune, it had not been permitted to start work. Moreover, Morocco had not allowed the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to establish, in the

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part of the Territory occupied by Morocco, an office for the purpose of facilitating the return of Saharan refugees.

8. Such actions by Morocco, which hindered the creation of the necessary conditions for the return of refugees, led him to conclude that Morocco had no desire whatsoever to begin that phase and complete the process of their return. The further the process advanced, the more obstacles Morocco created. The Moroccan authorities had recently informed MINURSO that United Nations aircraft could no longer transport either official representatives of States Members of the United Nations coming to visit the region, or international journalists. The international community should not condone such behaviour, since Morocco could not deprive Member States of their right to guarantee the transparency of the process that they were promoting through the provision of human and financial resources.

9. He drew attention to the repressive measures taken by the Moroccan police in the occupied zones, and referred to incidents of ill-treatment of the residents of those areas and to the large number of persons who had been reported missing.

10. The Saharan people were grateful to the international community for its interest in the decolonization of Western Sahara. The scrupulous implementation of the settlement plan was the only just and long-term solution of that problem, since it would enable the Saharan people to express their will by participating in a free and democratic referendum. In this regard, he called on Morocco to cooperate in the holding of the referendum in order to ensure lasting peace in the region.

11. Mr. Said (Frente POLISARIO) withdrew.

12. The CHAIRMAN said that he took it that, subject to any directives that the General Assembly might give in that connection at its fifty-third session, and in order to facilitate the Fourth Committee's consideration of the question, the Committee decided to transmit all the relevant documentation to the Assembly.

13. It was so decided.

14. The CHAIRMAN said that the Special Committee had thus concluded its consideration of the item.

QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR

15. The CHAIRMAN said that the delegations of Brazil and Sao Tome and Principe had requested to participate in the Special Committee's consideration of the question of East Timor. If he heard no objections, he would take it that the Committee acceded to those requests.

16. It was so decided.

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17. Mr. FERREIRA (Sao Tome and Principe) welcomed the political changes that were taking place in Indonesia and expressed the hope that the dialogue between Portugal and Indonesia, which was being held under the auspices of the United Nations, would be as constructive as possible with a view to reaching a settlement. With the new Indonesian Government, the negotiations, which so far had not yielded any tangible results, could be more productive. In order to achieve that productivity, all East Timorese must be involved, and the main objective must be a comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution in accordance with General Assembly resolution 37/30.

18. He noted with deep satisfaction that the Timorese National Convention in the Diaspora had been held for the first time in Portugal from 23 to 27 April 1998. A "Magna Carta" had been adopted, in which the Timorese people expressed their readiness to follow all international rules in order to build a country that would respect and uphold human rights and promote peace and economic integration.

19. Those principles would be possible only if the strategies of the main player could be changed during the forthcoming negotiations. Human rights were still a problem in the territory. At its last session, the Commission on Human Rights had expressed its deep concern over the reports of human rights violations in East Timor. The Commission had not adopted any resolution, since Indonesia had made a commitment to make arrangements for the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to visit East Timor before the Commission's next session. Indonesia and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights were working towards the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding on technical cooperation and an agreement on the early assignment of a programme officer to implement the technical cooperation programme. Those were positive steps, and his delegation wished to stress upon the Indonesian Government the importance of fulfilling its agreed commitments. Indonesia's new administration could demonstrate its good will by releasing all political prisoners.

20. The illegal occupation of East Timor by Indonesian forces did not give the Government of Indonesia the right to explore and exploit the oil and gas reserves, which belonged to the people of East Timor. The people of the Territory were not profiting from the trade between Indonesia and its partners.

21. In conclusion, his delegation wished to reiterate its support for the people of East Timor and hoped that the new Government of Indonesia intended to resolve the conflict in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law in order to bring security and prosperity to the subregion.

22. Mr. BAPTISTA (Indonesia) said that his delegation once again strongly objected to the consideration of the so-called "question of East Timor" and its inclusion in the Special Committee's agenda. The people of East Timor had already exercised their right to self-determination more than 20 years previously, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV), 1541 (XV) and 2625 (XXV). That had been witnessed by many foreign diplomats and international media representatives. Throughout the decolonization process, the United Nations had been systematically kept informed of the situation in East Timor. It was becoming clear to an increasing number of Member States and to

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the international community as a whole that Indonesia was giving its twenty-seventh province opportunities to ensure accelerated development in all spheres of life, including the protection of human rights.

23. In his delegation's view, East Timor was an inseparable part of Indonesia, and had long ceased to come under decolonization questions. It should also be recalled that every year since 1983 the General Assembly had postponed consideration of the item, and accordingly it was inappropriate for the Special Committee to take it up. Its consideration in no way facilitated the trilateral dialogue between Indonesia and Portugal under the auspices of the Secretary-General, but could only undermine the Secretary-General's efforts to find a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution. His delegation called on all other delegations to support the ongoing negotiations, as a viable mechanism for achieving a settlement.

24. Mr. NEVES (Portugal) referred the representative of Indonesia to Security Council resolutions 384 (1975) and 389 (1976), and also to all the resolutions on East Timor adopted by the General Assembly. If, as the representative of Indonesia asserted, the international community really considered the question of East Timor to be closed, it would not have appeared on the Special Committee's agenda for the past 22 years. Where the trilateral talks were concerned, the other two participants in them, unlike Indonesia, did not believe that consideration of the question in the Committee threatened the continuation of the negotiations.

25. Mr. BAPTISTA (Indonesia) said that he did not wish to prolong the debate, and requested that his delegation's clear position as just stated by him should be reflected in the summary record.

26. The CHAIRMAN recalled that at its 1487th meeting, the Committee had decided to accede to requests for hearings from petitioners.

27. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Gustafson (East Timor Action Network/United States) took a place at the petitioners' table.

28. Mr. GUSTAFSON (East Timor Action Network/United States) said that now, perhaps more than ever before, the people of East Timor needed the protection of the United Nations, and especially of the Special Committee, for their future could be decided in the next few months. East Timor was a major blot on the record of the United Nations, in that the Indonesian military occupation persisted in defiance of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

29. The actions of the new Government, such as the release of a few of the several hundred East Timorese being held in Indonesian jails, military bases and police stations and the proposal to release the East Timorese leader Xanana Gusmão if the world community accepted Indonesian domination over East Timor, gave grounds for hoping that it would be more flexible about the question of East Timor than the preceding Government. At the same time, the military which backed the acting President of the country was behaving differently, as was indicated by the violent suppression of a peaceful East Timorese student demonstration in Jakarta and by the military repression and violence against civilians in East Timor.

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30. The East Timorese people would eventually hold a referendum on their political future, under international supervision. That should be preceded by a withdrawal of troops and by more local self-government in East Timor. The change in Government in Indonesia offered new possibilities, but for the people of East Timor, meaningful change had not yet begun. In the economic crisis situation that had arisen in Indonesia, East Timor, which had never chosen to be part of Indonesia and had received none of the benefits of the prosperity of the Suharto era, had been hit the hardest.

31. Over the past year, a number of changes affecting East Timor had taken place in the United States. In November 1997 a new law had been signed specifying that contracts for the sale of United States military technology to Indonesia must state the expectation of the United States that the items would not be used in East Timor. Thus, for the first time since 1995, a United States statute had referred to East Timor as distinct from Indonesia. Legislation was under consideration in the Senate and the House of Representatives which would directly affirm East Timor's right to a referendum on self-determination. Following the scandal over the training programme for Indonesian military personnel conducted by the Pentagon, work had begun on legislation which would prohibit that programme, and under pressure from public opinion, the Pentagon had been forced to suspend it. Under yet another bill, delivery of all military shipments from the United States to Indonesia, including ammunition and spare parts, would be terminated. Deliveries would resume only after a democratically elected Government had taken power in Indonesia and there had been a substantial improvement in human rights in East Timor, Indonesia and Irian Jaya.

32. It was understood in Jakarta and Washington that the wind of change would bring freedom and democracy to Indonesia, and might steer East Timor towards self-determination. The United Nations, and particularly the special committee, could help East Timor maintain that course.

33. Mr. Gustafson withdrew.

34. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Pintea-Austin (London University) took a place at the petitioners' table.

35. Ms. PINTEA-AUSTIN (London University) reviewed the course of events in East Timor over the past 20 years, and said that the chances for breaking the deadlock in the negotiations on the future of East Timor had never been greater. However, for that to happen, the ground rules of Indonesian-East Timorese relations must be reappraised. The argument that the partition of the island of Timor had been a mere dictate of the colonial Powers had become history. Over 20 years on from the events of 1975, East Timorese society continued to lack social and political unity. In that time, neither had a real opposition formed, nor had a credible leader appeared. In the current context, calls for a referendum were just as futile as they had been over 20 years before, when the people of East Timor had been caught in the political cross-fire between the former master of East Timor and Indonesia. She wondered whether it was not already high time for Portugal to stand aside and allow a fresh perspective on the negotiations, and for the West to abandon the elusive moral high ground and become a participant rather than an observer in solving the East Timor dilemma.

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36. One of the important missing links in achieving reconciliation and unity was an appreciation of the actual state of affairs. East Timor could not ignore the geopolitical interests in the region, and the strategic significance of the Wetar and Ombai Straits remained a political reality for it. The culture of contrived involvement in East Timorese politics could therefore not be continued. The myth of the freedom fighters, which had already been dispelled on many occasions, seemed particularly harmful in that connection. However, instead of realism, idealism was preached. Could the recently declared "ethical" policy encourage realistic expectations? Given current economic conditions, political differences could not ignore the significance for East Timor of development. Attainable goals were now in sight: broader autonomy and better integration in the development of East Timor. In the future, Timor could become a unified, prosperous island and the Indonesian archipelago could be a loose federation of independent States bound together by economic and security interests. However, idealism about East Timor's future could go only so far as reality allowed it.

37. Ms. Pinteá-Austin withdrew.

38. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Araújo (Timor Foundation for Reconciliation and Development) took a place at the petitioners' table.

39. Mr. ARAÚJO (Timor Foundation for Reconciliation and Development) said that, conscious of the peculiarities of the political process in East Timor, he had in 1993 proposed holding informal meetings between the Timorese leaders, both for and against integration, to contribute to the creation of confidence-building measures between the Governments of Portugal and Indonesia. So that the negotiations between the two opposing groups could actually take place, it had been agreed that the political status of the Territory would not be discussed. However, at the conclusion of the second reconciliation meeting, a declaration had been approved and signed which expressed, inter alia, gratitude to the Government of Indonesia for its efforts to bring about the development of East Timor; stressed the need for special consideration to be accorded to the administration of East Timor and the special situation of East Timorese in custody; suggested a continued gradual reduction in troop numbers in East Timor and emphasized the need for school courses that would help safeguard the cultural heritage of the people of East Timor.

40. The current session of the Committee was taking place at a moment when Indonesia was going through a particularly complex period in its history. To acquaint itself with the current situation, the Third Way movement had sent an official delegation to Indonesia which had had meetings with the new President, the Chief of the General Staff - who was also the Minister of Defence - and the Foreign Minister, and had observed that new winds were blowing in Indonesia and serious criticism was being expressed about the regime of former President Suharto. The Third Way movement welcomed the statement by President Habibie of his readiness to grant special autonomous status to East Timor, although some circles were reacting negatively to that proposal and were seeking to increase pressure on Indonesia to force it to negotiate terms safeguarding the right to self-determination.

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41. The Third Way movement believed that only within the framework of the autonomy model, whereby a wide range of administrative and political rights guaranteeing the exercise of power by the East Timorese alongside the central Government's fulfilment of its obligations in the area of international relations, defence and fiscal and monetary policy, could the people of East Timor have a chance to develop a model of balanced development and stable growth. The movement stood by dialogue as the only appropriate vehicle for resolving the question of East Timor and favoured the establishment, by the Secretary-General, of a permanent consultative forum of the leaders of East Timor to reach an agreement acceptable to all parties involved. In the event that such an agreement was signed, the Third Way movement was ready to consider a consultative mechanism that would allow the East Timorese to express their wishes concerning the nature and substance of the agreement. The intra-Timorese dialogue on reconciliation must continue to be the forum for putting forward proposals and discussing working plans that could help ensure new, dynamic and profound relations between Timorese and lead to a new climate for negotiations between the Governments of Portugal and Indonesia under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

42. Mr. Araújo withdrew.

43. At the invitation of the President, Mr. Pereira (Timorese Youth for Reconciliation) took a place at the petitioners' table.

44. Mr. PEREIRA (Timorese Youth for Reconciliation) said that his organization was confident that a fair solution to the East Timor problem could be found, was convinced that such a solution would enable the Timorese to live in peace and harmony, whereby all parties would gain, and believed that the Timorese must respect each other by striving to find common ground and by making concessions where necessary. Almost all Timorese had now become convinced that further progress could be made only by supporting the reconciliation process. A sustainable peace could be achieved only through negotiation, not by force. The East Timor conflict had its own nature and causes. In reality, the conflict was between Timorese with support from Portugal and Timorese with support from Indonesia. There was no point arguing which were in the right because to do so led nowhere. The important thing in resolving the conflict was to build confidence and eliminate threats to any Timorese group, bearing in mind that they all had a common future.

45. Timorese Youth for Reconciliation recognized that without an atmosphere of confidence and respect in East Timor nothing positive could be achieved; that without wise leadership, young people would fall into anarchy and lose orientation; that without an understanding of the events that had taken place in East Timor over the past 22 years, it was impossible to move forward; that without regular meetings between East Timorese leaders to exchange views, all manifestations of discontent were meaningless; that without an understanding of the need to achieve consensus between all East Timorese, all the enthusiasm of East Timor's young people would go awry; that without a desire for peace, it would be difficult to refrain from criticism and provocation; that without an understanding that in the East Timor conflict there were no winners and no losers, it would be impossible to work out how to behave; and that without an awareness of the political realities, young people would be used as pawns in the

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struggle between Timorese. As was well known, the real issues behind almost half of all demands, including their motive, their means and their consequences, were economic. Now more than ever before, there were chances to come together in the development of East Timor that all Timorese of good will should make use of.

46. He suggested that the Special Committee should recommend that the Indonesian Government should continue to fulfil its responsibilities towards the people of East Timor with the understanding that social and cultural conditions were still unstable; that it should be aware that there were manifold ties between the East Timorese and the inhabitants of other provinces of Indonesia; that it should take into consideration the uniqueness of East Timor's cultural ties with the Portuguese people; that it should adopt an understanding attitude towards Portugal's position and that it should find a way out that was acceptable to the international community. Also, the Special Committee should recommend that the Government of Portugal should support the complex and comprehensive intra-Timorese reconciliation process, adopt an understanding attitude towards Indonesia's position and show flexibility in its approach towards the search for a final settlement. The Special Committee should also recommend that the Secretary-General should establish parallel consultations with the principal Timorese leaders alongside the meetings held as part of the all-inclusive intra-Timorese reconciliation process, that he should acknowledge the positive nature of the proposal by the new Government of Indonesia to dialogues with and hear the views of prominent Timorese leaders and that he should urge the Governments of Portugal and Indonesia to speed up the negotiation process. The Timorese people should be encouraged to refrain from criticism or provocation; to give more constructive support towards a final settlement of the East Timor problem; to understand that the political and economic reforms in Indonesia were a golden opportunity for the Timorese to pursue reconciliation and an acceptable settlement to the conflict; to take part in an open, democratic and civilized dialogue between the various groups of Timorese; and to forget the past misconduct of every side in the conflict so as not to erect eternal barriers in the way of a solution to the East Timor question.

47. Mr. Pereira withdrew.

48. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. de Menezes (Associação Socialista de Timor (AST)) took a place at the petitioners' table.

49. Mr. de MENEZES (Associação Socialista de Timor (AST)) said that his organization, an East Timorese political party, unflinchingly defended the right of the Timorese, who were suffering genocide, to self-determination and independence in accordance with the norms of international law, resolutions of the United Nations and the Constitution of Portugal. That position was shared by most Timorese and coincided with the wishes of the Fuerzas Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste (FALINTIL).

50. The AST unambiguously stated that it rejected any attempts to declare autonomy for East Timor under Indonesian sovereignty, in so doing having reference to article 293 of the Portuguese Constitution whereby Portugal remained bound by its responsibilities to safeguard the right of East Timor to

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self-determination and independence. It was the prerogative of the President and the Government of Portugal to take steps to implement that article.

51. The AST rejected any project aimed at integrating East Timor into Indonesia. Autonomy for Timor within Indonesia would be tantamount to integrating it into Indonesia officially, and therefore the AST could not accept it. The AST reaffirmed its resolve to defend the right of the Timorese people to self-determination and independence, as it had recently stated at a meeting with the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for East Timor, Mr. Jamsheed Marker.

52. Recent political events in Indonesia bore witness to the Indonesian people's belief in the ideals of freedom. There was growing discontent, and the ferment amongst Indonesian students was becoming ever plainer to see. All those events should serve as a warning to the Indonesian regime and the international community: in other words, the time had come to implement the United Nations resolutions on East Timor.

53. The newly appointed President of Indonesia, Mr. Habibie, wanted to show the world that he was making political reforms. The truth was different, however, as the situation of the Timorese refugees who had sought asylum in the Austrian Embassy in Jakarta in September 1997 showed. The Indonesian regime accused one of them, Avelino da Silva, of being a terrorist, which was untrue. It was a completely intolerable human rights situation, and the Indonesian regime deserved the harshest criticism from the Committee and from the international community as a whole. The AST counted on the Committee's support and called on all non-governmental organizations to begin an international campaign to free Avelino da Silva and his family.

54. The East Timor question would not come to an end with the release of Xanana Gusmão. In addition to solving the problem of the refugees in the Austrian Embassy and releasing all Indonesian and Timorese political prisoners, there was another serious political issue: self-determination and independence for East Timor. Taking into account the latest political events in Indonesia, the AST demanded the total withdrawal of Indonesian forces from East Timor and the formation of a provisional government by FALINTIL which would hold elections to a legislature so that the East Timorese people could determine their own future political status.

55. Mr. de Menezes withdrew.

56. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Tavares (SOS - Associação de Defesa dos Angolanos) took a place at the petitioners' table.

57. Mr. TAVARES (SOS - Associação de Defesa dos Angolanos) said that, as was well known, 23 years had passed since the occupation and annexation of the Non-Self-Governing Territory of East Timor. In a number of resolutions, the international community, in the person of the United Nations, had condemned Indonesia for genocide against the East Timorese people. Violations of human rights in East Timor had been and remained the everyday practice of the Indonesian regime. The departure of President Suharto and the appointment of President Habibie did not and would not guarantee a solution to the problem of

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East Timor; the solution lay in implementing the right to self-determination and independence.

58. The international community and the Angolan community in Portugal were closely following the socioeconomic and political transformations in Indonesia. He believed that the Indonesian Government should free all political prisoners with no preconditions whatsoever. He recalled that the leader of the Timorese opposition, Avelino da Silva, and his family and two assistants had been in hiding in the Austrian Embassy in Jakarta since September 1997. The difficult situation they were in was convincing proof of a breach of human rights by the Indonesian Government. On behalf of his association, he expressed gratitude to the Government of Austria for resisting the pressure put on it by Indonesia to surrender the refugees.

59. His association had organized a number of actions in defence of the Timorese, one of the most recent of which had been an act of solidarity with the Timorese refugees in the Austrian Embassy in which political, religious and other public figures - some 200 in all - had taken part, along with officials from the Austrian Embassy who were involved with the problem of the Timorese refugees.

60. He noted the attempts that were being made to impose autonomy on East Timor under Indonesian sovereignty, thereby preventing Portugal from fulfilling its responsibilities under international law and the Portuguese Constitution. He declared that he had complete confidence in Portugal as administering Power and that it was acting in defence of the legitimate interests of the Timorese people in respect of self-determination and independence, and he expressed the conviction that his position was shared by Angola and by the other Portuguese-speaking countries. In that connection, his association favoured continuing the dialogue between Portugal and Indonesia under United Nations auspices and with participation by such political forces as the Conselho Nacional da Resistência Timorense and the Associação Socialista de Timor (AST).

61. He called on the Special Committee to demand that the Indonesian Government should free Xanana Gusmão, Avelino da Silva and all Timorese and Indonesian political prisoners immediately.

62. Mr. Tavares withdrew.

63. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ramos Horta (Conselho Nacional da Resistência Timorense) took a place at the petitioners' table.

64. Mr. RAMOS HORTA (Conselho Nacional da Resistência Timorense) expressed sincere appreciation to Portugal for its unrelenting efforts in discharging its responsibilities towards the colonial people of East Timor. At a recent meeting in London, the Prime Minister of Portugal had announced a humanitarian aid package amounting to \$4 million to help the East Timorese cope with the impact of the Indonesian economic and financial crisis. However, Portugal was not the only entity with responsibilities towards East Timor.

65. In an interview with the Cable News Network (CNN) in May 1996, he had predicted that with President Suharto's departure from the scene a dialogue to

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resolve the conflict would be easier. He welcomed the release of some East Timorese prisoners and expressed the hope that it was not just a cosmetic gesture. All the East Timorese "guilty" of wanting freedom must be released without delay. He welcomed the more conciliatory statements by the Jakarta authorities. The Indonesian security forces had on the whole behaved in a manner that would have been unthinkable only a year before. However, there had been some tragic incidents reported by Reuters and France Presse where the Indonesian security forces had used force against demonstrators. In early June 1998, the armed forces had killed a young man suspected of stealing firewood. The Indonesian command in Dili had for the first time taken responsibility for the killing and apologized.

66. He welcomed the recent meeting between the Bishop of Dili and Indonesia's transitional President. However, it was regrettable that the Indonesian authorities still refused to engage the leader of the Timorese resistance, Xanana Gusmão, in dialogue. There could be no peace, stability or a lasting solution to the East Timor question unless the leadership of the East Timorese resistance participated in the dialogue. Xanana Gusmão had met with many public figures, and he noted the support expressed by the President of South Africa, the administration of the United States of America, the European Union, the Ibero-American Conference of Heads of State and Government and the Portuguese-speaking community throughout the world.

67. The recent announcement by the President of Indonesia that Indonesia was prepared to grant East Timor special status with a certain degree of local autonomy would have been a welcome step in the right direction if it had not been poisoned by the unacceptable demand for recognition that the invasion and annexation had been legitimate. For progress to be made, Indonesia must drop its insistence on that condition. The conflicting views on the legal status of the Territory should not be an obstacle to the fundamental changes that must occur there for Indonesia to gain international credibility and for a degree of peace to prevail in East Timor.

68. The Indonesian troop presence in East Timor should be reduced to 500 or 1,000, or about the level of the Portuguese presence in 1974 and 1975. The East Timorese resistance fighters should then cease all armed activities. A protection zone should be created in an agreed region of East Timor where the armed resistance forces and their families could assemble under international humanitarian protection. Prisoners should continue to be released, and torture must end.

69. The time had come for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to have a presence in East Timor. Such an office did not have to have an investigative function of any kind; it could promote dialogue and help mediate local conflicts. It could also have a role in providing training in human rights and humanitarian law amongst law-enforcement agents, the armed forces, the police and members of civil society.

70. He was prepared to agree to President Habibie's proposal, but only as a transitional measure and only if all unacceptable conditions were dropped. The East Timorese should be given the right to govern their own country. The most

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vexing issue, the legal status of the Territory, should be decided at a later stage.

71. No one was free of blame in the tragedy of the people of East Timor. The United Nations itself, Portugal, Australia, the United States of America, Japan and the political leaders of the East Timorese were all responsible. There was no point in blaming any one side or another, because in trying to apportion blame one would also find good arguments to explain their conduct at the time. Therefore, all should work in good faith with the Secretary-General to try to find a formula that satisfied all parties. He was prepared to meet at a moment's notice with the Indonesian authorities if they showed willingness to engage in dialogue.

72. Should Indonesia become more open, tolerant and democratic, it would look on independence for East Timor as a natural development. However, the people of East Timor might wish, without coercion and in total freedom, to be a part of Indonesia or to form an association with the colonial Power. Whatever the result of a referendum, under United Nations supervision, on self-determination, it would be honoured by all.

73. Mr. Ramos Horta withdrew.

74. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Miclat (Asia-Pacific Coalition for East Timor (APCET)) took a place at the petitioners' table.

75. Mr. MICLAT (Asia-Pacific Coalition for East Timor (APCET)) expressed gratitude for the opportunity to present a petition, and said that his organization understood that Indonesia and its allies were putting intense pressure on the Special Committee with a view to eliminating the question of East Timor from its agenda, while some elements were attempting to do away with the Committee itself to benefit their neocolonialist interests.

76. The people of East Timor had entered the final stages on their road to full self-determination, and the creation of the Conselho Nacional da Resistência Timorense bore witness to the readiness of the East Timorese to unite in the struggle for their sovereign and inalienable right to govern themselves. The efforts of the Secretary-General in the search for a peaceful and just solution to the East Timor dispute had helped animate that process. Thanks to those efforts, a meeting of the East Timorese leaders had taken place at which they had agreed to seek to better the situation of their long-suffering people and nation. The processes taking place in Indonesia had not brought about radical changes either in Indonesia or in East Timor. Suharto's heir had already stated that his Government's policy towards East Timor would remain essentially unchanged.

77. The people of East Timor would attain freedom and self-determination despite the fact that United States instructors were drilling Indonesian military officers and the United Kingdom was selling Indonesia weapons of mass destruction, despite the European Union's efforts to pacify a dictator in order to hold on to the Indonesian market, despite Australia's de jure recognition of Indonesia's annexation of East Timor and despite the perverse policy of

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non-interference on human rights issues operated by the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

78. Governments, including those of the ASEAN member States, were slowly coming under pressure from their own citizens, who were demanding that they should pay more attention to human rights issues, and particularly in connection with the East Timor problem. In Thailand, the third Asia-Pacific Conference on East Timor had been held successfully; that success bore witness to the possibility of change even within the club of leading ASEAN countries. According to information received through private channels from the new administration in the Philippines, shifts in its foreign policy were possible that would allow it to take a more active position on the East Timor question. Similar new trends could be perceived in other countries as well, in the region also, and outside it, from Australia to Japan and even inside Indonesia itself. The Special Committee and the United Nations could hasten the coming of freedom to East Timor. In that connection, his organization called on the United Nations and its appropriate agencies and officials to establish a working committee to prepare the foundations for self-determination for the people of East Timor; to establish a permanent office of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Dili; to extend the terms of reference of the all-inclusive East Timorese dialogue to allow East Timorese participants to discuss the political status of East Timor; to extend the Portuguese-Indonesian intergovernmental talks on East Timor that were being held under United Nations supervision to include recognized leaders of the East Timorese people; to send a team of special rapporteurs on various issues to ascertain details of the suffering of the East Timorese people and the human rights abuses there; and to assess the extent of drought and famine in East Timor and provide the necessary humanitarian assistance.

79. Peoples were themselves determining their fates by coming together, cooperating and supporting each other in their individual and common struggles for justice, progress and social if not national liberation. And they were doing so despite the growing scepticism about the ability of the United Nations to resolve conflicts such as the one in East Timor. However, despite the Organization's shortcomings, the principles that its founders had promulgated were valid, and in that regard the initiatives of the Secretary-General and even the General Assembly were worthy of note. He wished he could say the same of the Security Council.

80. Mr. Miclat withdrew.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

81. The CHAIRMAN drew members' attention to the requests for hearings that had been received from petitioners and suggested that in the absence of any objection the Committee should accede to those requests.

82. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.

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