

UNITED NATIONS

**“Steadfast”
United Nations
and
Timor-Leste**

HOUSE



Nasoins Unidas
iha Timor-Leste

"Steadfast"

The United Nations and Timor-Leste

INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to introduce this brief chronology which portrays the relationship between Timor-Leste and the UN. The history of this young country is still unfolding and therefore any attempt to document events and facts and to put them into context is likely to eventually be found to be short sighted. However August 30, 2019 marks twenty years since the "Popular Consultation" which led to independence, and it is a good time to start to chronicle the events which are significant in the relationship between Timor-Leste and the United Nations. Foremost among them is that this was the first time the United Nations was a midwife at the birth of a new country.



*UN in Timor-Leste
Resident Coordinator
Roy Trivedy.*

We do not claim this is an exhaustive history of the turbulent times. We hope it enables people with an interest in history, development and geo-politics to understand the scope and influence of the work of the United Nations in human rights; humanitarian aid; development, global politics and the struggles in the relationship between those involved in this period of history.

Our interested audience is also encouraged to remember when reading through this that, not mentioned here, the UN in 1975, 1999, and 2006 was confronting a multitude of complex and critical crises simultaneously. Timor-Leste wasn't its sole concern.

While this article does no more than touch on milestones, it reveals the massive commitment made to Timor-Leste by the international community, of which all members of the United Nations family and the international civil service can be proud. This includes the Security Council, General Assembly, Secretary-General's Office; UN political, humanitarian and development agencies; Special Rapporteurs; International conferences; Special Envoys; Commissions; Inquiries; Emissaries; report writers and researchers, film makers and photographers.

We also hope this chronology provides a link for the reader to the vast UN archives and those of media, NGOs, historians and sociologists which can help all scholars and those interested in history to read for themselves the words and deeds which have shaped the United Nations and Timor-Leste in the 21st Century.

Roy Trivedy,
Resident Coordinator,
United Nations in Timor Leste.
August 20, 2019.

PART ONE

“DETERMINATION”

1945-1974

The United Nations has been a partner of Timor-Leste throughout its decades-long struggle for self-determination, peace and prosperity.

It has shared the tribulations and achievements of the Timorese people who withstood discrimination and oppression at the hands of colonial or occupying powers.

Establishing a new sovereign nation was a task the UN had never previously undertaken but the former Secretary-General Kofi Annan said at the Restoration of Independence in 2002, when he came to Dili:¹

“Together, we have laid the foundations for a prosperous and democratic future.”

The United Nations came into being in 1945 following the devastation of the Second World War, with one central mission: the maintenance of international peace and security.

After the War 750 million people, a third of the world’s population, lived in Territories that were non-self-governing, dependent on colonial powers.

Although still In its formative years the UN recognised the passionate yearning for freedom in all peoples and was convinced the continued existence of colonialism prevented the development of international economic co-operation, social, cultural and economic development of dependent peoples and the UN ideal of universal peace.

About the UN

The UN has five principal organs: the General Assembly; the Security Council; the Economic and Social Council; the International Court of Justice; and the UN Secretariat. The UN System agencies include the World Bank Group, the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme, UNESCO, and UNICEF. The UN's most prominent officer is the Secretary-General, held by Portuguese politician and diplomat António Guterres since 1 January 2017.

Below the six organs sit, in the words of the author Linda Fasulo, "an amazing collection of entities and organizations, some of which are actually older than the UN itself and operate with almost complete independence from it".^[82] These include specialized agencies, research and training institutions, programmes and funds, and other UN entities.^[83]

The UN obey the *Noblemaire principle*, which is binding on any organization that belongs to the UN system

<https://archive.org/details/insidersguidetou00lind/page/n11>

¹ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2002/sgsm8243.doc.htm>

The General Assembly adopted, in 1960, "The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples."² Known as "the Declaration on Decolonization," it stated that colonialism should be brought to a speedy and unconditional end:

"All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

In 1962 the General Assembly established the Special Committee on Decolonization to encourage further decolonization, to monitor implementation of "The Declaration" and to make recommendations on its application. It was known as: "The Fourth Committee of the General Assembly."



Mari Alkatiri addresses the United Nations

From 1962 until 1973, the UN General Assembly approved successive resolutions, recognizing the right to self-determination in Portugal's colonies.³ In East Timor, conversations and debate about decolonization and the possibilities of independence began through an informal "anti-colonial study group" which included people like Mari Alkatiri, and Jose Ramos-Horta, which met occasionally in the park opposite the Governor's Palace.⁴

These informal meetings had an impact on many Timorese including resistance leader Xanana Gusmão who describes in his book: "To Resist is to Win," how he came across conversations around independence and colonialism from time to time.⁵

Others influenced by these discussions were women including Maria do Céu Pereira, Guilhermina Araújo, and Rosa 'Muki' Bonaparte Soares, who was known for her oratory skills. (And who would later participate in the negotiations with the Portuguese Decolonization Commission in Dili in May 1975.)

In May 1974 in Lisbon the "Carnation Revolution" sparked off an upsurge in democracy in Portugal and paved the way for the new government to move toward decolonization with great speed. The



Memorial (foreground) to Rosa 'Muki' Bonaparte Soares at Clock tower roundabout, Dili.

² Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples <http://legal.un.org/avl/ha/dicc/dicc.html>

³ Government of Timor-Leste History. <http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=29&lang=en>

⁴ Helen M. Hill, "Stirrings of Nationalism in East Timor: FRETILIN 1974-78, Origins, Ideologies and Strategies of a Nationalist Movement in East Timor", Oxford Press, Oxford NSW 2001.

⁵ "To Resist is to Win" autobiography Xanana Gusmão, Aurora Books, 2000 p18-21.

formation of political parties was approved by the Portuguese Governor in East Timor and the first local elections came on March 13, 1975.

The first party founded was *UDT, União Democrática Timorense* which favoured continued association with Portugal. The anti-colonial group formed into the Social Democratic Association, later Frente Revolucionaria de Timor-Leste Independente (FRETILIN), the pro-independence party. A third, much smaller party, *APODETI* supported integration with Indonesia.

Cold war considerations led to a civil war between FRETILIN and UDT in August 1975, where FRETILIN was victorious. The death toll was substantial as a later UN enquiry pointed out: "thousands of people were killed in combat, hundreds of political prisoners were executed and tens of thousands of civilians were displaced to West Timor."⁶

In September 1975 Indonesian troops, acting, as its representative Anwar Sani told the UN Security Council, "to take appropriate action to put an end to the continued violations of its territory and the harassment of its people" invaded the border areas in the western part of the island.⁷

By November the civil war was over and on November 28, 1975, FRETILIN President Francisco Xavier do Amaral read a one sentence "Declaration of Independence," and raised a red, yellow and black flag which had been designed and sewn the previous day by "Muki" Bonaparte. The small group present sang the anthem 'Patria, Patria' written by Borja da Costa.

The following day Nicolau Lobato was sworn in as Prime Minister; Mari Alkatiri as Minister of State for Political Affairs, Rogerio Lobato as Defence Minister, and Jose Ramos Horta as Foreign Affairs Minister.⁸

On December 7, 1975, Indonesia invaded East Timor and declared the half-island as its 27th province, renaming it "Timor Timur."

East Timor's Special Representative Jose Ramos-Horta appealed to the UN Security Council.⁹



Hose Ramos-Horta speaks at the UN

"Allow me to express our gratitude for the opportunity given to us to report on the just

⁶ Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/COITimorLeste.pdf>

⁷ UN Security Council meeting 1864, 15 Dec. 1975. Official record pages 9-13

⁸ Jill Jolliffe, *East Timor: Nationalism and Colonialism*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1978 (216-120).

⁹ https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/101096/files/S_PV-1864-EN.pdf

struggle of the people of East Timor for national liberation. We place great confidence in the United Nations and we believe that the noble ideals that inspired the founding of the Organization still prevail among peace-loving countries. We are hopeful that...this house will stop the war of aggression against the people of East Timor.”

A week later, recognizing the inalienable right of the people of East Timor to self-determination and independence in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the UN Security Council: “deplored the intervention of Indonesia’s armed forces and condemned the invasion and occupation of the country”. The Security Council unanimously agreed to:

“Call upon all States to respect the territorial integrity of East Timor as well as the inalienable right of its people to self-determination (and) calls upon the Government of Indonesia to withdraw without delay all its forces from the Territory.”¹⁰

1976 – 1998

In 1976 United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim appointed a Special Representative, Vittorio Winspeare-Guicciardi, who immediately requested to visit Timor-Leste, but was obstructed by the Indonesian and Australian Governments.¹¹



Pope Paul VI being greeted by Mr. Vittorio Winspeare-Guicciardi, Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva. 10 June 1969

As Geoffrey Robinson wrote in his report for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; ¹² “For the next 24 years, the territory’s political status remained in dispute, both in East Timor itself and internationally. Though some states recognized Indonesian sovereignty, the United Nations never did so. As far as the UN was concerned, Portugal retained its formal status as administering authority.”

According to *Chega!* (The Final report of the Timor-Leste Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation¹³) the resistance, led by Xanana Gusmão from the mid-1980s, accepted that

¹⁰ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/93735>

¹¹ “Last flight out of Dili” : memoirs of an accidental activist in the triumph of East Timor. David Scott.

¹² *East Timor 1999 Crimes against Humanity* a report commissioned by the United Nations office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) By Geoffrey Robinson University of California Los Angeles July 2003 (see ETAN: <https://www.etan.org/etanpdf/2006/CAVR/12-Annexe1-East-Timor-1999-GeoffreyRobinson.pdf>)

¹³ <http://chegareport.net/Chega%20All%20Volumes.pdf>

independence could never be achieved through war because of Indonesia's military dominance. This imbalance of power led to the decimation of the armed resistance movement FALINTIL, mass displacement and famine.

The UN Special Committee on Decolonization (Fourth Committee) throughout the period held debates on human rights violations including torture; disappearances; murder; crimes against women and children and forced displacements.



Meeting of the Decolonisation Committee

These conferences were organized by the UN Department of Political Affairs for Decolonization, in particular Francesc Vendrell, then head of its information and co-ordination unit. Vendrell, who had been a Law Lecturer at the University of Papua New Guinea at the time of Indonesia's 'act of free choice' in West Papua in 1969, was determined, above all,

to avoid a bad agreement being reached.¹⁴

These activities inspired solidarity: for example, the women's movement during the Indonesian occupation had two main objectives: to advocate for the nation's right to self-determination, and to draw attention to the severe human rights violations that were being perpetrated against East Timorese women.¹⁵

The United Nations Third World Conference on Women held in Nairobi from July 15-26, 1985 marked 'the beginning of a new chapter' for East Timorese women as Emilia Pires wrote:

'East Timor is now firmly on the agenda of the international women's movement, just as it is now firmly on the agenda of hundreds of other community groups in Australia and the world'.¹⁶

On October 5, 1989, Xanana Gusmão released the "Peace Plan for East Timor¹⁷" which raised the prospect of a cessation of hostilities, a referendum to decide on self-determination; the implementation of "a peace force" and he requested talks be directed by the UN Secretary-

¹⁴ <https://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/school-of-humanities-and-social-sciences/timor-companion/francesc-vendrell>

¹⁵ East Timorese Women, International Networks, and the Women's Human Rights Movement, Hannah Loney (2019): Women's History Review <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2019.1650995>

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ "To Resist is to Win," X. Gusmão.

General to include Portugal. Editor of Gusmão's autobiography, Sarah Niner, says a rigorous campaign was mounted around this peace plan."¹⁸

On November 12, 1991, the Indonesian army shot and killed hundreds of unarmed students at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili. The killings were filmed by Max Stahl and broadcast around the world within two days, leading to diplomatic sanctions against Indonesia.

This led to massive changes in the way East Timor was viewed by most UN member nations and the emergence of significant new solidarity movements in New York and Ireland.¹⁹ The UN sent Special Rapporteur on Extra-judicial killings, Bacre N'Diaye, to investigate. He found that the massacre arose from a planned military operation and that between 150 and 270 people were killed.²⁰

East Timor Special Representative Jose Ramos Horta was able to attend in Bangkok the Asia-Pacific NGO Preparatory Conference for the "UN Vienna Human Rights Conference" in March 1993 where delegates gave high priority to self-determination for East Timor.²¹

The key result of the World Conference on Human Rights was the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,²² which was adopted by consensus of 171 states on 25 June 1993. It called for a new office, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The United Nations General Assembly subsequently endorsed the declaration as part of Resolution 48/121.^[1] It also created the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 20 December 1993.

Also in 1993 regular talks began, mediated by the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali between the governments of Indonesia and Portugal to discuss the future of Timor-Leste. Initially the talks excluded the Timorese.

However, in April 1995 the two sides agreed that separate talks facilitated by the UN Secretary-General could take place between pro - and anti-integration East Timorese. So, on June 3-5, 1995 the first "All-Inclusive Intra-Timorese Dialogue" (All-TD), took place bringing together Timorese from the Resistance and others from within the country who worked with the Indonesians.

Altogether four meetings took place, the main organizers being Francesc Vendrell and Tamrat Samuel of the UN Political Affairs Department. The Indonesian government would not allow the

¹⁸ Ibid p139

¹⁹ 'East Timor – the Perfect Emergency' in *The Charity of Nations: Humanitarian Action in a Calculating World*, Ian Smillie and Larry Minear (2004), Kumarian Press, Bloomfield, USA.

²⁰ *Complicity: Human Rights and Canadian Foreign Policy, the Case of East Timor*, Sharon Scharfe, Black Rose Books, Montreal 1996 pp. 90-94. and *Negligent neighbour: New Zealand's complicity in the invasion and occupation of Timor-Leste*, Marie Leadbeater (2007), Craig Potton, Nelson. 165-6.

²¹ ACFOD (1993), *Our Voice: Bangkok NGO Declaration on Human Rights: Reports of the Asia Pacific NGO Conference on Human Rights*, Asian Cultural Forum on Development, Bangkok

²² Norchi, Charles (2004). "Human Rights: A Global Common Interest". In Krasno, Jean E. (ed.). *The United Nations: Confronting the Challenges of a Global Society*. [Lynne Rienner Publishers](#). p. 87.

agenda to include self-determination but focused on issues such as the Tetum language, culture and education. Nevertheless, the self-determination issue did come up and by the time the last meeting was held in October 1998 there was more agreement among the delegates.²³

In 1993 Bishop Ximenes Belo was appointed Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Dili by the Vatican, which chose to administer the Timorese Church directly from Rome, via Vatican diplomats, rather than attach it to the Indonesian Bishops' Conference.

Author Robert Archer argues this meant that the Catholic Church was the only local organization that communicated directly with the outside world, not via Jakarta, and maintained communication with a major international body, giving it more ability, 'to defend threatened individuals and threatened values' ²⁴.

In the eighth round of talks on East Timor in June 1996, held in Geneva and chaired by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali himself, parties discussed in greater detail a framework for the achievement of a "just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution" to the question of East Timor. ²⁵

On International Human Rights Day, December 10, 1996 the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded jointly to Jose Ramos Horta and Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo for their work towards a "peaceful solution" of the conflict in East Timor. The Prize raised the profile of the East Timor struggle for self-determination.²⁶

In the same year Secretary-General designate Kofi Annan addressed the UN Security Council, and encouraged further efforts to advance the situation in East Timor:

The Nobel Peace Prize 1996

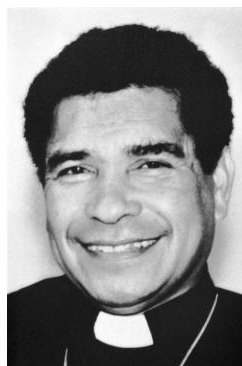


Photo from the Nobel Foundation archive.

Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo

Prize share: 1/2



Photo from the Nobel Foundation archive.

José Ramos Horta

Prize share: 1/2

From the Nobel Society web page.

²³ Geoffrey Gunn, *East Timor and the United Nations, the Case for Intervention*, Red Sea Press, New Jersey 1997, 45-50. David Webster, 'Non-State Diplomacy: East Timor 1975-1999', *Portuguese Studies Review*, Vol 11, No. 1, 2003, 21-2. Clinton Fernandes <https://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/school-of-humanities-and-social-sciences/timor-companion/francesc-vendrell>

²⁴ Robert Archer, "The Catholic Church in East Timor", in Peter Carey and G. Carter Bentley (1995), *East Timor at the Crossroads, the Forging of a Nation*, Cassell, London.1995, pp. 120-133.

²⁵ <https://www.un.org/press/en/1996/19960627.sgt2071.html>

²⁶ *From the Place of the Dead: Bishop Belo and the Struggle for East Timor*, Kohen, Arnold S. (1999), St Martin's Press, New York.

*"No nation needs to face or fight alone the threats which this Organization was established to defuse."*²⁷

The Secretary-General remained closely engaged and asked his Personal Representative for East Timor, Ambassador Jamsheed Marker, to intensify efforts to find a comprehensive, negotiated settlement.



UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali (right) meets Kofi Annan. 16 Dec, 1996

Between June 19-20, 1997 Mr. Annan met foreign ministers of Indonesia and Portugal in discussions described as: "Intensive, frank and constructive."²⁸

Indonesian President Suharto resigned on May 21, 1998 and was replaced by Vice President BJ Habibie.

For three days, in November-December 1998, at the invitation of the Indonesian Government, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, visited Indonesia to study the issue of violence against women as perpetrated or condoned by the

State.

In Dili, the Special Rapporteur had meetings with the Governor, the local Military Commander, the Police Chief, and representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and of women's organizations.

Ms. Coomaraswamy reported on systematic rape and torture by the Indonesian army, the lack of women's rights; and the abandonment of children fathered by the Indonesian military personnel. She also reported on violence against women in other parts of Indonesia and the impact of the downturn of the global economy which had suddenly and dramatically raised levels of poverty and civil unrest in Indonesia.²⁹

1999

In March 1999, after two days of talks with the Indonesian and Portuguese foreign ministers in New York, Secretary-General Annan, announced that East Timorese living all over the world would participate in a 'direct ballot' to decide whether the territory would remain part of Indonesia or become an independent state.

²⁷ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/1996-12-17/statement-general-assembly-secretary-general-designate-kofi-annan-17>

²⁸ <https://www.un.org/press/en/1997/19970623.SG2035.html>

²⁹ See report ETAN: <http://etan.org/et99/h-rights/unjan2.htm>

*"What we have sought to do is to select the most democratic and direct means possible to consult the East Timorese"*³⁰

On May 5, 1999 agreement was reached between the Republic of Indonesia and the Portuguese Republic on the Question of East Timor with the request for the UN hold a "Popular consultation with one person, one vote."

Geoffrey Robinson, in his report commissioned by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, wrote that pro-autonomy militias and elements of the Indonesia Army started a violent rampage in January, 1999, but after the May 5 agreement: "The terrible reality of the violence in 1999 is almost impossible to grasp."

He described 15 massacres which occurred in 1999, among the most notorious were the murders of April 6, when at least 30 people were murdered at the parish church in the town of Liquica; the deliberate execution of seven people while they were in the custody of Indonesian soldiers and officers, in the Sub-District of Cailaco, Bobonaro and the killing of at least 12 people who had taken refuge at the Dili home of a prominent supporter of independence, Manuel Carrascalão, on April 17.³¹

On June 11 the Security Council announced, in resolution 1246, that the UN would oversee the referendum.³² It established the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) for a period up to August 31, 1999. to oversee the referendum which was planned for August 8:

"...which will ascertain, on the basis of a direct, secret and universal ballot, whether the East Timorese people accept the proposed constitutional framework providing for a special autonomy for East Timor within the unitary Republic of Indonesia, or reject the proposed special autonomy, leading to East Timor's separation from Indonesia."



Ian Martin, UN. 25 January, 2012

UNAMET comprised of political, electoral and information components. It was led by the Head of Mission, Ian Martin, from the United Kingdom.

UNAMET had at its peak 242 international staff; 668 Timorese staff (3200 local people were employed for five days to oversee voting at each of the polling sites). It had 271 international police and more than 400 international volunteers, from 67 countries.³³

³⁰ UN Pressure Gives East Timor Vote on Independence:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/mar/13/indonesia.easttimor>

³¹ G.Robinson, OCHR Report, 2003."East Timor 1999 Crimes against Humanity" OHCHR University of California July 2003

³² <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/174/13/PDF/N9917413.pdf?OpenElement>

³³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Mission_in_East_Timor

UNAMET registered 446,666 people to vote including 13,000 outside East Timor.

On June 18, 1999 pro-Indonesian militias and FALINTIL signed a ceasefire and all FALINTIL troops were withdrawn, but civil unrest resulted in the deaths of many people, and the UN Security Council called on all sides to put an end to all violence and for utmost restraint before, during and after the consultation.

On June 22, the Secretary-General announced a three-week delay in the registration (and also in the ballot) on both operational and security grounds. Security concerns, and in particular continuing violence by pro-Indonesian militias, led to a further three-day delay in mid-July³⁴.

On June 29, in a statement read by its President, Baboucarr-Blaise Ismaila Jagne of Gambia, the Security Council called on UNAMET to follow up reports of violent activity and expressed “grave concern” at an attack on the UNAMET office in Maliana, East Timor.³⁵

The referendum was postponed to August 30. Security Council Resolution 1257 extended UNAMET mission to September 30, 1999³⁶.

On August 30 the people of East Timor went to the polls. 78.5% voted in favor of independence. At 9am on September 4, the Secretary General announced the results from New York at the same time as Ian Martin read the statement to the media at what is now Hotel Timor.



Secretary-General Kofi Annan visits East Timor 1999.

On September 4 Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced the result from New York. Timorese learned the result by TV and radio. An upsurge of militia violence began almost immediately.

Truckloads of Timorese were evacuated across the border to West Timor. Schools, health posts, houses and shops were burned as well as the majority of the country’s infrastructure, including the telephone, postal service and banking systems.³⁷

The Royal Australian Air Force temporarily evacuated UNAMET staff, foreign nationals and the Catholic Bishop, Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, to Darwin.

³⁴ *ibid*

³⁵ <https://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19990629.SC6695.html>

³⁶ <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1257>

³⁷ John Martinkus, *A Dirty Little War: An Eyewitness Account of East Timor’s descent into hell 1997-2000*, Random House, Milson’s Point, NSW, 2001.

Ian Martin said:

*"It is surely now clear that what happened was planned, premeditated evil which involved murder, rape, forced deportation and physical destruction on an extraordinary scale."*³⁸

On September 14, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) warned in a special, urgent report...

*"The lives and food security of large numbers of displaced people have been seriously threatened by escalating civil unrest and killings."*³⁹

On September 15, the Security Council, expressing concern at the deteriorating situation in East Timor, issued Resolution 1264 authorising a multinational force to restore peace and security to East Timor, to protect and support the United Nations mission, and to facilitate humanitarian assistance operations until such time as a United Nations peacekeeping force could be approved and deployed in the area.

On September 17 the first United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) humanitarian airdrops delivered food and blankets to tens of thousands of people hiding in the mountains.⁴⁰

On September 20 International Forces East Timor (INTERFET) deployed to East Timor as a non-UN force operating in accordance with UN Resolutions. Led by Australia, which contributed 5,500 personnel and the force commander, Major General Peter Cosgrove, it disarmed the militias, restored peace and security, and supported UNAMET.



WFP rice shipment being unloaded in Dili, 1999.

The UN agencies UNHCR, IOM, WFP, FAO, UNICEF, and WHO were instrumental in ensuring that humanitarian needs were met quickly.

Robinson says the violence between early January and late October resulted in at least 1,200 civilians, and perhaps as many as 1,500, being killed⁴¹. "Some were shot dead, while others were decapitated, disemboweled or hacked to death with machetes. Many were subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Women and girls suffered rape and other crimes of sexual violence. The systematic violence fueled the forcible displacement of the population on a massive scale."

In this period 15 United Nations Timorese staff were murdered by militia.

³⁸ <https://peacekeeping.un.org/mission/past/etimor/DB/br191199.htm>

³⁹ <https://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19990914.sag56.doc.html>

⁴⁰ <https://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19990917.wfp1053.doc.html>

⁴¹ Robinson UNOHCR

On September 27 The Commission on Human Rights convened a special session on the situation in East Timor by adopting -- through a roll-call vote -- a resolution requesting the Secretary-General to establish an international commission of inquiry to investigate human-rights violations.⁴²

At the end of October the United Nations Security Council authorised the non-military “UN Transitional Authority in East Timor” (**UNTAET**) to administer the territory, exercise legislative and executive authority during the transition period and support capacity building for the people of East Timor. UNTAET was a humanitarian and development partner.

A report on the assessment of Development Results by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said⁴³ two and a half decades of Indonesian occupation and a violent transition from Indonesian rule in September 1999 had left the country devastated and its people living in extreme poverty:

“Seventy percent of Timor-Leste’s economic infrastructure (e.g. housing stock, public buildings and utilities), 80 percent of its schools, and virtually all medical facilities were destroyed. The extensive devastation to homes and farms and the demolition of infrastructure throughout the country added to the complexity of peace- and state-building”.

UN support would come under several different mandates including peacekeeping, supporting capacity-building efforts to strengthen the security and justice sectors and ensuring the provision of humanitarian and reconstruction assistance.

2000 – 2006

From December 1999 to May 2002 UNTAET was led by [Sergio Vieira de Mello](#) from Brazil who had the task of overseeing the first ever United Nations administration to bring a newly independent country into existence.



Secretary-General Kofi Annan (left) arriving in Dili greeted by independence leader Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão. At right is UN Transitional Administrator Sergio Vieira De Mello.

The media, gathered for independence celebrations, reported that Xanana Gusmão was secretly returned to Dili by Interfet on October 21, 1999, and the next day he addressed a hastily convened meeting outside the Palácio do Governo. Newspapers reported the crowd was ecstatic to hear him saying:

“Today is a day of freedom. All of our suffering, we can leave behind. Today we see our future.

⁴² <https://www.un.org/press/en/1999/19990927.hrcn978.doc.html>

⁴³ https://www.undp.org/content/dam/timorleste/docs/reports/Evaluation/ADR_Timor-Leste_EN_2013.pdf

This land is ours. We will be independent forever.”⁴⁴

The Secretary-General, on November 15, established an International Commission of Inquiry to systematically gather and compile information on possible violations of human rights and acts which might constitute breaches of international humanitarian law committed in East Timor since January 1999.⁴⁵

At the end of January 2000, the Inquiry report was presented to the Security Council⁴⁶:

“The International Commission of Inquiry has concluded that there were patterns of gross violations of human rights and breaches of humanitarian law which varied over time and took the form of systematic and widespread intimidation, humiliation and terror, destruction of property, violence against women and displacement of people. Patterns were also found relating to the destruction of evidence and the involvement of the Indonesian Army (TNI) and the militias in the violations.”

The Commission recommended the UN immediately begin to assist the return of displaced persons; disarm militias; conduct further investigations and prosecutions; and seek effective remedies for vulnerable populations against human rights violations.



East Timorese refugees return from Atambua camp in West Timor.

In August 2000 the UN High Commissioner for Refugees suspended its operations in West Timor following an Aug. 22 attack on three staff members who were severely beaten by suspected militiamen near the town of Kefamenanu, 180 kms east of Kupang.

The agency resumed activities on August 29 after Indonesian authorities arrested two of the alleged assailants and agreed to increase security for humanitarian workers.

Violence flared in Atambua in West Timor where UN staff came under attack and the UN office was trashed and vehicles burned. Three UN staff - one from Ethiopia, one from Croatia and an American – were murdered.⁴⁷

An evacuation of staff included those working for World Food Program, the UN’s children’s agency UNICEF, the UN’s migration agency IOM, and non-governmental organisations.

⁴⁴ Rebel Leader Returns to East Timor: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/oct/22/indonesia.easttimor>

⁴⁵ <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/f7e999/pdf/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/f7e999/pdf/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2000/9/3ae6b8262c/timor-murders-unhcr-staff-still-shock.html>

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees Ms. Sadako Ogata said she was “shocked and profoundly saddened” and called for better security.⁴⁸

“These were peaceful, unarmed humanitarian workers who gave their lives trying to help those who had lost everything in conflict. This horrible incident again underscores the dangers faced by humanitarian workers in conflict and post-conflict situations around the world. Their job is to assist and protect some of the world’s most defenseless people. But today’s tragedy should prompt all of us to ask: Who is going to protect the protectors?”

A total of 391 UN and NGO workers were evacuated - 134 from the Atambua area and 257 from Kupang.

Mr. Vieira de Mello oversaw the writing of Timor-Leste’s first Development Plan, the first elections for the Constituent Assembly and the writing of the Constitution.



A member of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) Portuguese contingent speaks with a group of local children, as he patrols the Becora district of Dili.

UNTAET established the East Timorese “National Consultative Council” to serve as a forum for political and community leaders to advise the Transitional Administrator and discuss policy issues. The Council had eleven Timorese members and four international members. A Transitional Judicial Service Commission was also established to ensure representation of East Timorese leaders in decisions affecting the judiciary in East Timor.

Humanitarian tasks continued, and the UN refugee agency, UNHCR, worked with East Timorese refugees in West Timor where an estimated 125,000 remained in more than 200 different locations around West Timor.⁴⁹

Special Panels for Serious Crimes, established by UNTAET Regulations in 2000, but within the District Court of Dili, had jurisdiction over crimes against humanity committed between January 1 and October 25, 1999 in East Timor.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2000/9/3ae6b81733/unhcr-confirms-three-staff-killed-west-timor-attack.html>

⁴⁹ <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2000/8/3ae6b82734/timor-situation-west-timor-camps-remains-tense.html>

⁵⁰ See U.N. Transitional Administration in East Timor Regulation 2000/15, On the Establishment of Panels with Exclusive Jurisdiction over Serious Criminal Offences, § 5, UNTAET/REG/2000/15 (2000); and for references to outcomes see: “First Report of the Special Rapporteur on Crimes against Humanity” Sean D. Murphy George Washington University Law School. https://scholarship.law.gwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2371&context=faculty_publications

On August 30, 2001, the first free and fair elections in East Timor resulted in an 88-member Constituent Assembly, which nominated a transitional Council of Ministers the following month. The Council of Ministers had 24 members and was led by transitional Chief Minister, Mari Alkatiri.

In March 2002 a new constitution was promulgated⁵¹ and on April 14, 2002, the first Presidential Elections were held, won by Xanana Gusmão. Mr. Gusmão was sworn in as the first President of the new Independent Republic of Timor-Leste on May 20. This day is now known as Restoration of Independence Day.

The Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, visited Timor-Leste for independence celebrations in May 2002 and attended a ceremony at Obrigado Barracks, which he renamed “UN House:”



Secretary-General Kofi Annan (second from left) and East Timor's president Xanana Gusmão (centre) attending the start of the Independence Day celebrations. Seated third from right, next to President Gusmão, is President Megawati Soekarnoputri of Indonesia. 19 May 2002.

“Now that independence is achieved, the challenge of nation-building remains. I am pleased to be able to say that the UN family is fully committed to assisting East Timor as it embarks on its new course as an independent country. The new mission, UNMISET, will focus its efforts on consolidating a stable environment. The UN agencies will play their role, alongside the bilateral donors, in promoting development and alleviating poverty.”

On January 30, 2002, at the Security Council and sitting alongside Jose Ramos Horta, Mr. Vieira de Mello said:⁵²

“With the approach of independence comes the end of a quite remarkable chapter in the history of the United Nations, one marked by an extraordinary collaborative effort. On 20 May — Independence Day — East Timor’s dogged and inspiring quest for self-determination will have been completed. Our happiness, however, should be and is tempered by the reality that independence does not mark the end of East Timor’s struggles. Far from it.”

Mr. Vieira De Mello – after whom the Timor-Leste Human Rights Prize would later be named - raised concerns about the lack of progress against those who had been accused of violations of human rights:

⁵¹ http://timor-leste.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Constitution_RDTL_ENG.pdf

⁵² <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/457459?ln=en>

*"For the people of East Timor, peace and reconciliation efforts will mean little if the principal perpetrators of atrocities committed in 1999 are not brought to justice."*⁵³

Mr. Annan attended the independence celebrations and spoke to the crowds just a few minutes before midnight on May 19.

"This will not be a long speech. It cannot be. For in just a few minutes, I must stop as we reach midnight on 19 May. With the start of 20 May, you will step into a new era in your history, as an independent nation. I am deeply honoured and moved to be with you at this moment."

Never before has the UN been asked to administer a territory on its way to Independence...we have carried out this noble mission with courage and imagination.

At this moment, we honor every citizen of East Timor who persisted in the struggle for independence. We also remember the many who are no longer with us — but who dreamed of this moment. It is their day, too.

I salute you — people of East Timor — for the courage and perseverance you have shown.

Yours has not been an easy path to independence. You should be very proud of your achievement. That a small nation is able to inspire the world and be the focus of our attention is the highest tribute that I can pay to you.

I am also deeply proud of the partnership between you — the people of East Timor — and us, the United Nations. Together, we have laid the foundations for a prosperous and democratic future.

I have no doubt that you will fulfil your new roles -- as citizens of East Timor and of the world -- with spirit and great success.

*I wish you a bright and secure future."*⁵⁴

On the same day UNTAET was succeeded by the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET) established by Security Council Resolution 1410 of May 17, 2002, to provide assistance to core administrative functions, including law and order, critical to the viability and political stability of East Timor for

Sergio Vieira de Mello

In a UN career that lasted more than three decades, De Mello had worked to resolve conflicts in some of the world's most troubled states, including Bosnia, Rwanda, Cambodia, Kosovo, Sudan and Bangladesh. Mr. Vieira de Mello went on to serve as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Iraq. He was killed in a 2003 explosion, for which Al Qaida subsequently claimed responsibility, specifically referring to his work in East Timor as a reason for targeting him.^[26]

In 2003, when Xanana Gusmão and Bishop Felipe Ximenes Belo (co-recipient of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize) addressed a function to honor East Timorese martyrs, the name of Sergio Vieira De Mello was among them.

⁵³ <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/457459?ln=en>

⁵⁴ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2002/sgsm8243.doc.htm>

two years until all operational responsibilities could be fully devolved to the East Timor authorities. Subsequently, the Security Council extended the mission's mandate for another year to permit the new nation, which had changed its name to Timor-Leste, to attain self-sufficiency.

Jose Ramos Horta told the UN Security Council in December 2002⁵⁵

“The process of designing a blueprint for the economic development of East Timor is quite a unique experiment in our country. It is probably one of the few exercises in national planning and development in which civil society, represented by the churches, nongovernmental organizations and intellectuals, have the opportunity, together with the Government, to reflect on the priorities and needs of the country before such a development plan is approved and implemented.

That is what we are trying to do in East Timor. The process is a partnership between the United Nations, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, the East Timorese Government and a civil society commission, led by Mr. Xanana Gusmão himself. This is in a country where unemployment is very high and poverty is rampant — a country still recovering from the trauma of past violence. However, one area that is not encouraging is that of domestic violence, in particular against women. East Timorese leaders are puzzled that our society was able to conduct itself with great civility during the election process in July and August, without a single violent incident, and that the crime rate is among the world’s lowest, while the rate of domestic violence is surprisingly high. We will work hard in the coming days, weeks and months to eradicate this shameful aspect of our reality in East Timor.”

On February 25, 2003, the Special Panels for Serious Crimes, established by UNTAET Regulations in 2000, indicted Indonesia's former armed forces commander, General Wiranto, and six other senior generals and the ex-governor of East Timor, Abilio Soares.

The UN said in a statement: "The accused have all been charged with crimes against humanity for murder, deportation and persecution."

"The crimes were all undertaken as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against the civilian population of East Timor and specifically targeted those who were believed to be supporters of independence for East Timor."

"The mandate for the Dili court covers all crimes committed in 1999 in East Timor, irrespective of whether the suspects are East Timorese or Indonesian. So far it has indicted 178 people, but 106 of those - including 12 Indonesian soldiers - remain free in Indonesia. Indonesia has not sent any of its nationals to East Timor to face trials in such cases."⁵⁶

An independent "Commission of Experts" – composed of Justice Prafulla Chandra Bhagwati of India, Professor Yozo Yokota of Japan, and Ms. Shaista Shameem of Fiji – was appointed in January

⁵⁵ <https://www.un.org/press/en/2002/SC7285.doc.htm>

⁵⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/feb/25/indonesia.unitednations>

2005 by the Secretary-General to review the prosecution in Indonesia by the *Ad Hoc* Tribunal and in Timor-Leste by the Special Panels of serious human rights violations committed in 1999.

In its Report to the Security Council of July 15, 2005,⁵⁷ the “Commission of Experts” recommended that Indonesia's judicial and prosecutorial capacity be strengthened by assembling a team of international judicial and legal experts to provide independent specialist legal advice to the Office of the Attorney General on international criminal law, international humanitarian law and international human rights standards.

It also suggested that prosecutions before the *Ad Hoc* Court set up to try individuals in connection with crimes against humanity committed in April and September 1999, be “comprehensively reviewed” and that some should be reopened, as deemed appropriate, on the basis of grounds available under Indonesian law.

A key recommendation was that:

“If the recommendations are not implemented within six months from a date to be determined by the Secretary-General...the Commission recommends that the Security Council adopt a resolution to create an ad hoc criminal tribunal for Timor-Leste located in a third State.”

The UN peace keeping forces remained until May 20, 2005 when UNMISET completed its mission.

Once the peacekeeping mission withdrew, a new political mission, the United Nations Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL) supported the development of critical State institutions and the police and provided training in observance of democratic governance and human rights.



Prime Minister John Howard of Australia (left) visited the United Nations Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL) and was received by Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Timor-Leste Anis Bajwa (right) who is acting as Officer-in-Charge. July 18, 2006

UNOTIL was scheduled to end its mandate in May 2006, and the Security Council had already received the Secretary-General's recommendations for the post-UNOTIL period.

However, a series of events which started in February in Timor-Leste culminated in April-June in a political, humanitarian and security crisis beginning with protests, and included ransacking of the Government Palace, while houses and shops were burned throughout the capital and elsewhere.

A report compiled later by the UN Commission of Enquiry said that between April and May 38 people

⁵⁷ <https://undocs.org/s/2005/458>

had been killed - 23 civilians, 12 PNTL police officers and 3 F-FDTL defence force soldiers and 69 people suffered injuries: 37 civilians, 23 PNTL officers, 7 F-FDTL soldiers and 2 UNPOL officers.⁵⁸

Timor-Leste urgently requested police and military assistance and on May 25-26, an "International Stabilization Force" led by Australia which also included troops from New Zealand and Portugal, began securing key installations in the country.

On June 11, 2006⁵⁹, the President of Timor-Leste, the President of the National Parliament and the Prime Minister wrote to the Secretary-General requesting that he establish a United Nations police force in Timor-Leste to maintain law and order until the national police could undergo reorganization and restructuring.

Reporting to the Security Council in August 2006,⁶⁰ the Secretary-General noted that although the level of violence had abated significantly since its peak in late May and early June the crisis was far from resolved, with many of the underlying factors needing attention over the longer term. Among these were the failure of government to engage with people, the unhealed wounds of the past and high youth unemployment.

In assessing the situation, the Secretary-General's report pointed to the mixed legacy of the 24 years of occupation, resulting in a gulf of understanding separating those who spent years as resistance fighters, those who lived in occupied towns and villages and those who went into exile.

The Secretary-General wrote:

"Veterans and young people were also likely to be divided by a generation gap. Among other factors were long-standing frictions between easterners and westerners in the armed forces and the police."

The report said the roots of the imbalance in power between the institutions of State, allowing the executive to operate with few constraints, were political, institutional and constitutional.

The Secretary-General noted that successes achieved through successive peacekeeping missions would be undermined if a failure of socio-economic development left Timor-Leste in poverty and unemployment.

"Long-term development efforts to translate available budgetary resources into programmes addressing rural poverty and urban unemployment were as crucial as anything that could be done through a new United Nations mission."

He stressed that the process of nation-building must be Timorese-owned and led.

⁵⁸ Report of the United Nations Independent Special Commission of Inquiry for Timor-Leste (Item 100)

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/COITimorLeste.pdf>

⁵⁹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/timor-leste/timor-leste-letter-dated-13-jun-2006-un-sg-addressed-president-security-council>

⁶⁰ This section from: <https://unmit.unmissions.org/background>

2007- 2012

The Secretary-General recommended the establishment of a United Nations multidimensional, integrated mission, with the mandate to support the Government of Timor-Leste and to assist it in its efforts to bring about a process of national reconciliation; to support the country in all aspects of the 2007 presidential and parliamentary electoral process; to ensure, through the presence of



Guilhermina Ribeiro (front, left), Director General of Timor-Leste's Secretariat of State for Security, and Finn Reske-Nielsen (second from left), Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Timor-Leste, preside over a ceremony marking the resumption of primary policing responsibilities by the Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste (PNTL) in Ainaro District. 12 April 2010

United Nations police with an executive policing mandate, the restoration and maintenance of public security; to assist in liaising with the Indonesian military through the impartial presence of United Nations Military Liaison Officers; and to assist in further strengthening the national capacity for the monitoring, promotion and protection of human rights.

The Security Council, in Resolution 1704 (2006)⁶¹ of August 25, 2006, established the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) consisting of a civilian component, including up to 1,608 police personnel, and an initial component of up to 34 military liaison and staff officers.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the unrest was particularly painful, because the country was a “child of the international community” that the United Nations was determined not to abandon it at its critical time of need.⁶²

“Through four successive missions, the Secretary-General recalled, the United Nations had played a key role in laying the foundation for Timor-Leste’s democratic institutions and processes. Today, however, those stood exposed. The sad events of recent weeks had reflected shortcomings not only on the part of Timor-Leste, but of the international community, in the nation building process. We have learned -- at a painful price for Timor-Leste -- that the building of institutions on the basic principles of democracy and the rule of law is not a simple process that can be completed within a few short years.”

Meantime, in July 2006, Mr. Annan also reported to the Security Council on progress into the need for justice for those who suffered human rights violations in 1999.

In his report to the Security Council, Mr. Annan noted that those who committed such violations might escape punishment altogether.⁶³

⁶¹ <https://www.refworld.org/docid/453786b50.html>

⁶² <https://www.un.org/press/en/2006/sc8745.doc.htm>

⁶³ <https://undocs.org/s/2006/580>

“Crimes against humanity, gross violations of human rights and grave breaches of humanitarian law were committed in East Timor in 1999. There can and should be no impunity regarding such acts. Establishing the truth and promoting reconciliation are necessary parts of the healing process for both countries and victims. It would be deeply regrettable, however, if the reconciliation process foreclosed the possibility of achieving accountability.”

The Secretary-General called for renewed efforts to investigate those crimes, as well as to bring hundreds of indicted persons, including those living in Indonesia and elsewhere, to justice.

“The limited degree of accountability achieved so far for the serious human rights violations of 1999 continues to raise questions about how best the institutions in both countries can address this concern. It is vital to Timor-Leste that justice be done and seen to be done. A culture of impunity will threaten the foundations of the State. The Commission is of the view that justice, peace and democracy are mutually reinforcing imperatives. If peace and democracy are to be advanced, justice must be effective and visible.”

The UN also acknowledged its own weaknesses and offered itself as: “.. a candid and self-critical friend.”⁶⁴

The UN oversaw the second round of parliamentary elections, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, continuing the tradition of support from all Secretaries-General, attended the opening of the new parliament in December 2007;

“I know the challenges ahead are enormous. There is a need to review and strengthen the security sector, as well as governance and the rule of law, including the justice system. Economic and social development must be accelerated. And measures must be taken to address unemployment, particularly among young people. For real progress to be made, the underlying causes of the crisis need to be addressed.

“You also have the sustained support and partnership of the entire United Nations family. We will remain at your side as you work to consolidate democracy and good governance. We will remain at your side as you strive to uphold the rule of law and promote human rights. We will remain at your side in the efforts to reach the Millennium Development Goals -- through reducing poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, gender discrimination and gender-based violence.”⁶⁵

On February 11, 2008 after near-fatal attack on Timor-Leste President José Ramos-Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão (who escaped uninjured) the Security Council in Resolution 1802⁶⁶ called on the Government of Timor-Leste to bring to justice those responsible for the attacks and for the people to remain calm, exercise restraint and maintain stability in the country.

⁶⁴ Ibid (Conclusion p43)

⁶⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/timor-leste/secretary-general-visiting-dili-urges-parliamentarians-make-peoples-voice-heard>

⁶⁶ <https://unmit.unmissions.org/unmit-mandate-extended-12-months>

The Security Council extended UNMIT's mandate for another year.

"The extension is a strong indication of the United Nations' continuing resolve to assist the people of Timor-Leste to further stabilize and develop their country," The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Timor-Leste Mr. Atul Khare said.⁶⁷

UNMIT's mandate was extended each year until the 2012 elections. At its peak it had an authorised deployment of 1748 police personnel, 438 international civilian staff, 933 national staff and 134 United Nations volunteers.

UNMIT sponsored an independent review of the justice sector.



A voter casts her ballot in Timor-Leste's parliamentary elections.

The Independent Comprehensive Needs Assessment (ICNA) legal experts were to determine the extent to which the country's justice system was meeting the needs of Timor-Leste and its people.

It found many shortcomings in education, training, resources, language and access and again touched on events of 1974-1999:

*"The judicial system of Timor-Leste, as currently constituted, is not actively engaged in the process of addressing the crimes of the past or holding accountable those who committed them. There is no question, however, that Article 160 of the Constitution contemplates prosecution for offenses occurring between 1974 and 1999 in either the national court system or before an international court."*⁶⁸

Development work to create sustainable and effective institutions, laws and regulations, never stopped.

Throughout the period 2002-2009 Timor-Leste's government with technical and program support from most UN agencies and other bilateral and development partners had created various "strategic national development plans", to integrate the support of the international development and multi-lateral communities.

The Government of Timor-Leste and the United Nations in March 2009 signed the first "UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)."

⁶⁷ [ibid](#)

⁶⁸ <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/document/TL-S2006628.php?print=true>

It was guided by the goals and targets of the “Millennium Declaration,” which had been endorsed by the Government, as well as the Programme of the IV Constitutional Government for 2007-2012, the International Compact for Timor-Leste, the 2007 National Recovery Strategy and other relevant documents.

The UNDAF translated these into a common operational framework for development activities upon which individual United Nations organisations would formulate their actions for the period 2009-2013.

“Consolidating peace and stability” was the cornerstone for the UNDAF and under this overarching goal, three inter-related areas of cooperation emerged as critical for United Nations support to the people and Government of Timor-Leste during this five-year period:

- (1) Democratisation and Social Cohesion, including deepening State-building, security and justice;
- (2) Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Livelihoods, with particular attention to vulnerable groups, including youth, women, IDPs and disaster-prone communities; and
- (3) Basic Social Services, encompassing education, health, nutrition, water and sanitation, and social welfare and social protection.

In April 2009 the Timor-Leste Development Partners met. The Timor-Leste NGO Forum stated:

“One of the most important of these challenges is the ongoing need to demonstrate a commitment to criminal justice, by holding perpetrators of serious crimes to account. Another fundamental responsibility is to ensure that all Timorese citizens, including those in rural areas, can enjoy their basic human rights, such as the rights to education, food and health, and the environment is protected to safeguard the rights of future generations.”⁶⁹



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (front right, on red carpet), escorted by Taur Matan Ruak (front left, on red carpet), President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, inspects the honour guard at the Presidential Palace in Dili. 15 August 2012

UNMIT completed its mandate at the end of 2012 and with it went the role of peacekeeper. Henceforth all UN programs would focus entirely on sustainable development.

President Taur Matan Ruak said UNMIT would be long remembered as a success in peacekeeping operations.⁷⁰

“The United Nations has for the last 13 years accompanied and supported us in our tasks in State and Nation building. Experience, competence and sensitivity of many mission chiefs and envoys contributed to the results achieved.”

⁶⁹ <https://www.laohamutuk.org/econ/09TLDPM/NGOPaperTLDPM09.pdf>

⁷⁰ <https://unmit.unmissions.org/timor-leste-says-partnership-un-will-go-after-mission-leaves>

"UNMIT's contribution in stabilizing the country, creating an atmosphere of trust and ensuring conditions to hold the 2007 and 2012 elections deserves recognition and will be long remembered as a success in peacekeeping operations."

The Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General head of the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), Finn Reske-Nielsen said:

"Timor-Leste still faces many challenges. However, a peacekeeping mission is no longer best placed to support efforts to meet those challenges. The time has come for Timor-Leste's interaction with the international community to be guided through different structures and modalities. Delivering effective support to Timor-Leste's development and institution building priorities will require the continued commitment and financial contributions of the international community."

Representing UNMIT, Police Commissioner Luis Carrilho mentioned the "impressive advances Timor-Leste has made since 1999" in building its institutions and restoring self-determination, security, and hope for the future for its citizens.

"I believe that there is no better way to celebrate this day than to pay tribute to the tireless work and endless dedication to all the Timorese women and men who work for a safer, better, and more prosperous future for their families and their communities. They are the ones that make sure, every day, that Timor-Leste is really able to determine its own future. The United Nations is proud to support them, and their leaders, in these efforts."

In August UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, made his second visit to Timor-Leste, welcoming progress made by the country's security sector. He addressed 250 new recruits at the police academy:

"PNTL has come a long way since (I visited Timor-Leste in 2007) – resuming responsibility for all police operations in Timor-Leste last year.

I would like to congratulate you on this great achievement and all of your progress since then.

"PNTL is increasingly showing its capacity to handle internal security on its own.

The presidential and parliamentary elections were held in a peaceful and orderly manner without any major security incident.



UN Police officers are pictured as they prepare for deployments to districts of Timor-Leste, alongside the national police force (PNTL), ahead of presidential elections on 17 March.

17 PNTL officers have recently been certified for deployment in UN missions. This represents the third group of PNTL officers serving as UN police, after 10 officers served in Kosovo and two in Guinea-Bissau.

I thank PNTL for its contribution to the maintenance of global peace.”

Mr. Ban in his address to Parliament said:

“For over 16 months, the national police, PNTL, have borne the responsibility for the conduct of all police operations in Timor-Leste. They are not only making a difference here in the country, but around the world.⁷¹ This is a powerful testament to the growing professionalism and institutional development of your security forces – as well as your commitment to global solidarity.”

Mr. Ban outlined three areas that policymakers must focus on to advance the country’s progress - promoting inclusive growth that reduces inequalities, contributing to the promotion of peace and security, and empowering women and young people.

“As the UN now reduces its footprint in the country, you are continuing to set a global example of how to successfully emerge from conflict to lasting peace. As we shape our new relationship, Timor-Leste can count on the United Nations’ steady support as you lead the way forward.”[33]
There is no limit to Timor-Leste’s future if you continue to show a strong commitment to democratic values, meaningful participation, peace and stability.”

During discussions with Government and State officials and other Timorese stakeholders regarding the UNMIT drawdown and closure at the end of December, a Security Council mission to Timor-Leste commended the progress achieved in the country over the decade since the restoration of independence and especially since UNMIT commenced its work in August 2006 in the aftermath of the crisis. In part the report said:

“Among the poignant examples of the significant advances made, the mission noted the return of some 150,000 internally displaced persons and the closure of tented camps; the maintenance of a calm and stable security situation since the 2008 attacks on the President and the Prime Minister; a continued low reported crime rate after PNTL assumed responsibility for all policing operations in March 2011; Timor-Leste’s leadership as Co-Chair of both the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building and the Group of Seven Plus fragile States to promote aid effectiveness and the achievement of the Millennium



Colonel Martin Dransfield (right), Chief Military Officer for the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), and Vamba Koneh (left) Oecusse Team Leader, with a villager from the Naktuka area in Oecusse, a disputed border area between Indo Indonesia and Timor-Leste that is being monitored by UNMIT's Military Liaison Group. 28 July 2012

⁷¹ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2012-08-15/address-national-parliament-timor-leste>

Development Goals; the strengthening of capacities of State institutions (including in the security, justice and governance sectors)”⁷²;

PART TWO

“DEVELOPMENT”

2013- August 30, 2019

While UNMIT’s mandate ended on 31 December 2012, the Serious Crimes Investigation Teams (SCIT) continued to function until 30 June 2013 so that it could finish its pending investigations. SCIT completed the final 396 investigations and transferred all files to the Timor-Leste Office of the Prosecutor-General.



Emilia Pires

In a ceremony held on 17 June, the UNMIT Liquidation Team handed SCIT’s electronic database over to the Office of the Prosecutor-General.

There had been almost half a decade of peace in Timor-Leste, and attention increasingly could be focused on development and Timor-Leste increasingly took its place in the world.

The Secretary-General during 2012 announced a panel of 27 “Eminent Persons,” including Timor-Leste’s Emilia Pires, to seek “transformational shifts” in the global approach to development. (In August 2019 Ms. Pires Co-Chairs the International Dialogue of Peacebuilding and State building.⁷³)

The “Sustainable Development Goals” replaced the “Millennium Development Goals” which had dominated development thinking in the early part of the decade.

The SDGs coincided with another historic agreement reached in 2015 at the “COP21” Paris Climate Conference. Together with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, signed in Japan in March 2015, these agreements provide a set of common standards and achievable targets

⁷² Report of the Security Council mission to Timor-Leste, November 3-6, 2012 S/2012/889

⁷³ The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State building is the first forum for political dialogue to bring together countries affected by conflict and fragility, development partners, and civil society. It is composed of members of the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), the g7+ group of fragile and conflict-affected states, and member organisations of the Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and State building. <https://www.pbsbdialogue.org/en/id/about-international-dialogue/>

to reduce carbon emissions, manage the risks of climate change and natural disasters, and to build back better after a crisis.

Timor-Leste played an active role in this process, notably by working with the g7+ group of countries to successfully advocate for a goal on peace, stability and effective institutions - resulting in SDG Goal 16 - and offering detailed wording for targets that were of particular relevance for developing countries.

Both Government and Parliament of Timor-Leste adopted the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

Aiming to develop a “prosperous and strong” upper middle-income nation by 2030, the country embarked on a process of economic, social and political development, which is encapsulated in the ‘Timor-Leste National Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 (SDP)’.

After the closure of the last peace mission, and since 2013, the UN in Timor-Leste has been present through a “UN Country Team.”

Under the guidance of the UN Resident Coordinator, a dozen UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes have been providing support for the development of Timor-Leste and to assist the Government and other partners to implement the Strategic Development Plan⁷⁴.

A small human rights team has been part of the Resident Coordinator’s Office to provide advice to the UN but also to national partners in the field of human rights.

In 2017, Timor-Leste, working with the UN Country Team, developed the “SDG Road Map⁷⁵” describing Timor-Leste’s approach to achieving **sustainable development, framed within the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs**.

A new UNDAF was developed for the period 2014-2019 to support Timor-Leste to implement the vision laid down in the SDP to: “transition Timor-Leste from a low income to upper middle-income country, with a healthy, well-educated and safe population by 2030.”

The Government of Timor-Leste adopted the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals through Government Resolution No. 34 of 2015 on September 23, 2015, two days before they were formally adopted by the United Nations at the General Assembly.

The UNCT has played a substantial role in hundreds of policy reviews, law reform, training projects and sustainable development activities.

⁷⁴ <https://www.un.org/tl/en/>

⁷⁵ http://timor-leste.gov.tl/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/UNDP-Timor-Leste_SDP-Roadmap_doc_v2_English_220717.pdf

Among the major development gains in Timor-Leste in this period those substantially supported by the UNCT were:

Agriculture

Introduced and tested Conservation Agriculture (CA) as a sustainable crop intensification technology that increases farmers' resilience to drought and mitigate climate change by eliminating the need for 'burning.'

Democracy

Peaceful Elections 2012, 2017 and 2018.

Establishment of the National Youth Parliament in 2010 (*Parliamentu Foin-sa'e Nian*) a platform for young people to contribute to national development processes.

Children and Education

Development of the National Action Plan for Children (2016-2020) in Timor-Leste.

Educational curriculum Reform.

Disaster Risk reduction.

Strengthening emergency and disaster response.

Employment

Establishment of a National Labor Force Development Institute (INDMO), the institution responsible for the development and implementation of the vocational training policy.

Gender

Timor-Leste's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2003

Laws Against Domestic Violence.

National Action Plans on Gender-based Violence (2012-2016, and 2017-2021).

Gender and the Private Sector (2014-2017).

The Maubisse Declaration for rural women.

Resolutions for mainstreaming gender into the State Budget.

As of 2019, Timor-Leste has the highest representation of women in National Parliament in the Asia-Pacific Region at 40%,

Health

Bringing malaria under control;

Elimination of polio and the polio-free status maintained since 1995;

Leprosy eliminated in 2010;

Maternal and neonatal tetanus eliminated, and the status maintained since 2012.

Building a professional cadre of medical professionals, especially: Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care.

Tobacco control legislation;

Hundreds of sub-district health personnel and thousands of community volunteers have been trained on a variety of topics including Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI), detection and treatment of malnutrition, clean and safe delivery, essential newborn care, infant and young child feeding practices, and community-case management of diarrhea and pneumonia

Salt iodisation.

Vaccination rates and coverage around 90 per cent.

Nutrition

School Feeding Programme;

Strengthen Government's efforts to prevent and treat moderate malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women and children under 5.

In 2011, set up of a local fortified food facility in partnership with the Government and private sector.

Infrastructure

Establishment of target for Open Defecation Free (ODF) status in all municipalities by 2020. By 2019 two municipalities certified and declared ODF and six others are in process of declaration by the end of the year.

Rehabilitation, construction and maintenance of rural infrastructure using Labor-Based Technology.

During 2008-2012, supported the rehabilitation/construction of 304 km of roads and maintenance of 5,037 km of roads.

Since 2012 total of 552km of Timor-Leste's core rural roads networks have been improved.

For a more comprehensive list of UN agency achievements in Timor-Leste 1999-2019, see this online document: <https://un.org.tl/en/media-center/publications-resources/download/6-publications/58-united-nations-in-timor-leste-achievements>

In a statement on Independence Day 2019, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Timor-Leste, Roy Trivedy, reminded the community of the words of the former Secretary-General Kofi Annan:

"On the Restoration of Independence Day, 2019, that Timor-Leste has become more secure over the past 17 years. But I think the bright future that Mr. Annan spoke is one where no person is hungry; everyone has a house and decent work; where women are respected and children nurtured, and the environment treasured for its gifts.

*There remains a way to go before those goals are reached but success will come if the spirit remains burning bright."*⁷⁶

In July 2019, foreign Minister Dionisio da Costa Babo Soares took to the world stage at the United Nations in New York and presented Timor-Leste first report as part of the Voluntary National Review of the implementation of the SDGs at the High Level Political Forum

It its presentation: "From ashes to reconciliation, reconstruction and sustainable development - Voluntary National Review of Timor-Leste 2019," the Government reflected on the achievements made in just 20 years but acknowledged further challenges.

In August 2019, the United Nations in Timor-Leste commemorated the 15 local Timorese UN staff who were killed while working for the UN in 1999, in a memorial service at Gleno, where the remains of the only woman of the 15 - Ana Lemos - are held at a monument to commemorate all heroes of Timor-Leste's struggle.

On the 29th of August, the UN welcomed former UNAMET and other UN mission staff, , including Ian Martin who returned as a guest of honor of Timor-Leste, to celebrate the momentous occasion 20 years earlier, where Mr. Martin and his UN colleagues and those who followed helped lay the foundations of a steadfast relationship between the UN and Timor-Leste, and a sound democracy.

ends

⁷⁶ https://un.org.tl/administrator/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&layout=edit&id=276

I would like to thank those who helped with this chronology, particularly Resident Coordinator Roy Trivedy; Anjet Lanting, Human Rights Adviser, UN in Timor-Leste, who provided substantive content and edited the script a number of times; Dr Helen Hill, who worked tirelessly for balance and truth; Till Sebastian Skrobek and Nina Lahoud whose personal recollections and understanding of the UN system and knowledge of the documents archive was valuable; Ian Martin and Alex Tillman of the UN in Timor-Leste for historical guidance and the UN Country Team for support and input.

Ian Mannix
Dili,
August 2019

Note: All images except where stated are available at the UN Multi Media and photographic library, <https://www.unmultimedia.org/>