

Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Challenges in Timor-Leste and the Southeast Asian region

Ameerah Haq, Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), spoke on peacekeeping and peacebuilding challenges in Timor-Leste and the Southeast Asian region at the Regional Roundtable on East Asia Contributing to UN Peacekeeping: Military, Police, and Civilians, on 17 October 2011, at Kuala Lumpur. ISIS Focus reproduces her speech in this issue.

Distinguished guests, distinguished representatives of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, the Asia Pacific Civil-Military Center of Excellence, the International Peace Institute, and the Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is great to be back in Kuala Lumpur. Thank you for the privilege of addressing you today. As Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste, I am delighted to be with you this evening to share my perspectives on peacekeeping and peacebuilding, drawing particularly on my experiences from Timor-Leste. I will also make some observations from my assignments in Sudan and Afghanistan.

Before going into some of the challenges of the complex areas of peacebuilding and peacekeeping, let me say a few words about Southeast Asia's generous contributions to UN peacekeeping and about some of the recent developments in Timor-Leste.

Many countries in the Southeast Asia region have proven to be key partners in peacekeeping – in Timor-Leste and around the world – as we heard and saw today. Unfortunately, demand for peacekeeping has increased in recent years. In step with that, we have seen new momentum in the region's involvement in all aspects of UN peacekeeping, from military to policing and



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civilian roles. Indeed, we heard this morning about continued dialogue between the UN and Asean on increasing this role. Furthermore, Southeast Asia now hosts a number of quality training centres to continue developing these capabilities. These are all very welcome developments. I have seen your troops – military and police – in the remotest regions of Afghanistan, Darfur, South Sudan, and now in Timor-Leste. You should all be proud of the tremendous contributions that your brave men and women are making to world peace.

Southeast Asia can also draw on its own experience of peacekeeping within the region, with the UN mission to Cambodia, UNTAC, in the early 1990s. Since then, Cambodia has made the transition from being a *recipient* of peacekeeping support to *contributing* troops to peacekeeping



Participants at the forum

missions abroad. I am pleased to say that Timor-Leste is already on that same path to becoming a peacekeeping contributor. On 12 April this year, two police officers of the Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste, or PNTL for short, were deployed to the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea Bissau. And on 15 July, twelve army engineers from the Defence Force F-FDTL began a six-month joint training to prepare for integration into a Portuguese contingent to serve with the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, marking Timor-Leste's first military contribution to a UN peacekeeping mission. This relates exactly to our discussions this afternoon about joint deployments.

As one of the youngest countries in the world, and Asia's youngest, Timor-Leste is in many ways fortunate to be part of Southeast Asia. The commitment of partners in the region has been central to the work of UN peacekeeping missions to restore stability and build the foundation for lasting peace in the country. We have greatly appreciated the generous support of Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand in providing highly capable force commanders, military contingents, formed police units and police personnel to successive UN Missions in Timor-Leste.

For example, Malaysia has maintained a sizable peacekeeping presence in Timor-Leste over the years. They continue to be one of the biggest contributors to our UNPOL contingent with 215 police personnel. This follows earlier policing contingents to the UN Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISSET) in 2003.

Southeast Asia's support to UN missions in Timor-Leste has also extended to high-level leadership roles. Some of you may recall Mr Eric Tan Huck Gim of Singapore who served in Timor-Leste twice – first as Force Commander of UNMISSET in 2002-2003 and later returned in 2006 as the DSRSG for Security Sector Support and Rule of Law for UNMIT. These contributions of such well-regarded and capable military, police, and civilian personnel contributed much to the UN's work in Timor-Leste.

Beyond this support, there are several other reasons why Southeast Asia makes for excellent company for a young country like Timor-Leste. The region has demonstrated a range of impressive achievements. There is a commitment to multilateralism, with Asean leading the way. There is a well-developed regional security dialogue and architecture, for example the Asean Regional Forum, the Shangri-La Dialogue, and the ISIS's own Asia-Pacific Roundtable. There is a vibrant regional

marketplace that continues to develop at impressive rates. In due course, opportunities for further economic, social and cultural exchanges and cooperation will arise. Timor-Leste's own unique experiences and perspectives make it a valuable partner in all these fora. As you are all aware, Indonesia has been a very strong proponent of Timor-Leste's entry into Asean.

In the ten years since achieving independence, Timor-Leste has made remarkable progress. Conflict and strife have been replaced by peace and economic growth. This is made clear by the number of Timorese we see every day building new homes, and running small businesses – all in a safe and secure environment.

Timor-Leste is enjoying strong economic growth, with notable steps forward in socio-economic development. These include reductions in the percentage of the population living in poverty, and improvement in human development indicators. I have been particularly pleased to see the Government's renewed commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to coherent, transparent, well-coordinated and genuinely Timorese-owned planning processes. This commitment has been accompanied by a steady increase in the capacity of Timorese institutions in the governance, justice, and security sectors to serve the Timorese people in an effective and accountable manner.

Finally, there have also been significant advances made in the political sphere. Political differences in Timor-Leste are today played out in democratic fora – not on the streets. The signs of Timorese leaders' commitment to political stability, and constructive dialogue on national development priorities are clear and manifold. I am heartened by the strong commitment of all parties to the democratic process and to ensuring peace and stability.

Timor-Leste is entering an important period, with presidential and parliamentary elections coming up in 2012. As requested by the Government,

UNMIT will provide technical, logistical, and security – primarily through police – support for the elections. In the lead-up to this milestone, we are very encouraged by the strong commitment of leaders across the political spectrum to free, fair, and peaceful elections. May I also add that the Government of Timor-Leste has requested international observers for the upcoming elections. Let me use this occasion to ask you to respond to this request, either on a bilateral basis, or through regional organisations.

Given the improvements in the overall situation in Timor-Leste, UNMIT is expected to withdraw by December 2012. To ensure a smooth transition, we are working closely with Timorese authorities to ensure that the activities currently carried out by the mission, which will need to be continued after 2012, are effectively transferred to other institutions. To this end, we have established a jointly-owned transition planning and implementation mechanism, working under the guidance of the President, the Prime Minister and myself. We are also keeping our international partners fully engaged throughout the process to ensure we all move forward together. As the head of UNMIT, making sure that the mission concludes its mandate in Timor-Leste in a way which creates the best possible conditions for continued peace and stability is my top priority.

With these experiences from Timor-Leste in mind, I would now like to turn to some of the broad challenges of implementing peacekeeping and peacebuilding agendas.

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The first challenge is doing both peacekeeping and peacebuilding at the same time. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding are not alternatives to each other nor are they sequential phases of activity. Peacebuilding does not begin when peacekeepers leave, or when we deploy a peacebuilding office.

Peacebuilding is a process whereby a country emerging from conflict builds longterm stability and restores the social contract between the state and the people. It is a national challenge, and fundamentally, a political process. It entails a range of activities aimed at making peace self-sustaining and reducing the risk of relapse into conflict.

Peacekeeping on the other hand, is one of several policy instruments that may support peacebuilding. It brings a certain set of international capacities to support peacebuilding in the critical early stages when risks are highest. That includes facilitating political processes, providing a security umbrella, and enabling other partners to channel support where it is needed.

International peacekeeping must always be accompanied by a solid strategy for building a lasting peace. In Timor-Leste, this has meant devoting significant resources to supporting institution-building, especially in the justice, governance and security sectors. For example, while UNMIT initially had an executive policing mandate, our eyes were always on the goal of building the capacity of the national police of Timor-Leste. Now that we have handed over primary policing responsibility, transferring knowledge and skills to our Timorese counterparts

is our main role. Here, I think it is important to note that there is a tension between 'doing' and building capacity.

The second challenge is getting the goals of peacebuilding right. The key for sustainable peace is not only to remove conflict, but to help develop strong institutions which are able to manage and cope with political disagreement. Needless to say, conflict is a natural part of a democratic society which needs to be factored into the design of systems and processes which ensure constructive and participatory outcomes.

In Timor-Leste, we have seen political institutions mature since the crisis of 2006. Furthermore, bodies and institutions to deal with important issues like corruption and civilian oversight of security institutions have been added or significantly strengthened. In these areas the United Nations and regional and bilateral partners can play an important role, providing technical expertise and advocacy for a strong, transparent, and effective institutional framework, able to prevent political disagreement from spiralling into violent conflict.

The third (and fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh) challenge is staying the course. Peacekeeping is, by nature, a limited endeavour. However, the institutional approach required for successful peacebuilding requires a long-term commitment. As I mentioned earlier, this is exactly why our transition planning aims to identify partners who can carry on the long-term work begun by successive peacekeeping missions in Timor-Leste. In this regard, the role of regional powers is vital, as sources of technical assistance, economic cooperation, and, if needed, conflict resolution.

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Indeed, interlinked regional interests in shared stability and prosperity make regional partners uniquely placed to provide this kind of long-term support. A sound division of labour and responsibilities between international, regional and bilateral partners will help us make sure that we do not reduce our peacebuilding support to countries emerging from conflict too quickly or abruptly. In the case of Timor-Leste it will certainly need the engagement of its Southeast Asian partners for a long time to come, to consolidate progress made to date.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that while transitioning out of conflict and building

sustainable peace are ultimately processes that must be led by the people and leaders of a given country. The engagement of the United Nations, member states and regional and international stakeholders is essential in ensuring their success. As for Timor-Leste, I am looking forward to the elections next year, and am confident that we will be able to bring peacekeeping to a close as planned at the end of 2012, allowing Timorese authorities and their partners to focus on sustaining stability and building better lives for the Timorese people. As indispensable partners on Timor-Leste's road to peace to date, I hope that Southeast Asia's support to the Timorese in this process will continue long into the future.

Thank you very much.



(From left): Jean Baillaud, Jim Rolfe and Adam Smith