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QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR

Progress report of the Secretary-General

1. In my last progress report (A/42/539), dated 8 September 1987, I informed the General Assembly of the status of my efforts to facilitate a comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor. In this connection, I reported that Indonesia and Portugal were considering the possibility of a delegation from the Portuguese Parliament undertaking a visit to East Timor, with a view to obtaining first-hand information on the situation.
2. Since then, I and Under-Secretary-General Rafeuddin Ahmed, who has been assisting me in these endeavours, continued our consultations with the two Governments. On 2 October 1987, I met with then Foreign Minister Mochtar Kusumaatmadja of Indonesia and discussed with him the idea of a visit to East Timor by a delegation from the Portuguese Parliament. On 14 January 1988, the question was discussed at a meeting with Portuguese Foreign Minister Joao do Dour Pinheiro, in New York. During the course of subsequent contacts with the Permanent Representatives of the two countries, it was agreed that the idea should be submitted to the Parliaments of both countries for their consideration.
3. On 4 February 1988, at a meeting with the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, a letter from the Speaker of the Indonesian Parliament, addressed to his Portuguese counterpart, was delivered to me. On the same day, I transmitted the letter to the Permanent Representative of Portugal.
4. Mr. Ahmed met on 2 June with Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas. On 8 June 1988, I discussed the situation with Portuguese President Mario Soares, who informed me that the invitation was being considered by the Portuguese Parliament.

* A/43/150.

On 26 July 1988, the Permanent Representative of Portugal delivered to me a letter of reply from the President of the Portuguese Parliament addressed to his Indonesian counterpart. On 28 July 1988, I transmitted the letter to the Permanent Representative of Indonesia.

5. On the basis of the letters exchanged by the Parliaments of the two countries, both sides have agreed in principle that a Portuguese Parliamentary delegation would undertake a visit to East Timor, in order to obtain first-hand information on the situation, subject to the elaboration of mutually acceptable terms of reference. Accordingly, they have further agreed that the Permanent Representatives of the two countries should resume their contacts under my auspices, with a view to reaching agreement on the indispensable terms, modalities and the timing for the proposed visit.

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6. During the period under review, the United Nations Children's Fund and other humanitarian agencies have continued to carry out programmes for the benefit of the East Timorese people. In addition, the programme for the repatriation of former Portuguese civil servants and their dependants, as agreed by both sides at the talks held under my auspices, has continued to be implemented by the International Committee of the Red Cross, with funding provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Since the inception of the programme, 54 former civil servants and their dependants, representing 405 persons, have been repatriated to Portugal. Repatriation of the remaining few cases is expected to be completed within the next few months.

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7. I have assured both sides that my good offices remain available and that I will continue to do whatever I can to facilitate the process of dialogue and the search for a comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement. I shall also continue to follow the humanitarian situation closely, with a view to facilitating general access to East Timor and promoting, to the fullest extent possible, the work of the United Nations and international humanitarian organizations providing assistance to the people of the territory.
