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QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR

Report of the Secretary-General

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 34/40 of 21 November 1979 concerning the question of East Timor. Paragraph 6 of the resolution reads as follows:

"The General Assembly,

...

"6. Requests the Secretary-General to follow the implementation of the present resolution and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session;".

2. In a letter dated 21 February 1980 addressed to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Trusteeship and Decolonization, the Permanent Representative of Indonesia to the United Nations stated as follows:

"I have the honour ... to inform you that, as is well known, the Indonesian Government categorically rejects any resolution of the United Nations which does not recognize the completion of the process of decolonization of East Timor, since the people of this Territory have exercised their right to self-determination by choosing independence through integration with Indonesia and the integration was completed on 17 July 1976.

"Consequently, any attempt to involve the United Nations in East Timor will constitute an unwarranted interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign Member State, thus violating the purposes and principles of the United Nations, specifically, Chapter I, Article 2, paragraph 7, of the Charter of the United Nations."

3. In a note dated 3 October 1980 addressed to the Secretary-General, the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations stated as follows:

"As Members of the United Nations are well aware, Portugal has not been able to exercise its responsibilities as the administering Power in East Timor, as a result of the events that took place therein in 1975.

"Portugal has since been following closely the development of the events in that Territory and has endeavoured to associate itself with the rest of the international community to provide the Timorese people with the urgent humanitarian assistance that they seem to require, in view of the situation prevailing in that Territory.

"The communiqué issued recently by the Council of Ministers of Portugal, a copy of which is hereto attached, 1/ underscores once again our commitment to work with all the other parties concerned in order to alleviate the suffering of the people of East Timor."

4. In a communication transmitted to the Secretary-General on 3 October 1980, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) gave the following account of actions taken with regard to the implementation of resolution 34/40:

"... the Office approached the Indonesian and Portuguese authorities directly in order to consult with them and to work out procedures acceptable to the parties concerned, for rendering appropriate assistance.

"The Portuguese authorities expressed their willingness to co-operate with UNHCR for assistance to East Timorese, particularly in the field of family reunion and repatriation. In fact, the Portuguese Government had already requested UNHCR intervention and assistance in the case of a group of East Timorese in Portugal who wished to return to their country of origin.

"In a note to the Permanent Mission of Indonesia to the United Nations Office at Geneva, UNHCR referred to discussions held concerning the problem of family reunion and repatriation for the people of East Timor following General Assembly resolution 34/40 of 21 November 1979. The mandate of UNHCR relating to the exclusively humanitarian aspects of the problem as mentioned in paragraph 2 of the Statute of the Office was reiterated. The Office expressed the hope that the Government of the Republic of Indonesia would consider favourably arrangements for co-operation with UNHCR to assist in family reunion and repatriation of the people of East Timor.

"In addition, close relationship was established with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with a request to examine the possibility of organizing the transfer of East Timorese from Portugal to their country of origin.

1/ The text of the communiqué has been circulated in document A/C.4/35/2.

"At the same time, ICRC intended to transfer 70 people from East Timor to Portugal for family reunion purposes and to assist in the repatriation of about the same number from Portugal to East Timor.

"Concerning assistance to refugees from East Timor, it should be noted that UNHCR stands ready to act. Presently, UNHCR has assisted in the resettlement of a limited number of the persons concerned. No request for assistance for groups of refugees from East Timor has so far been received from Governments."

5. In the discharge of the task entrusted to him by the General Assembly in this regard, the Secretary-General will continue to follow closely the implementation of resolution 34/40. Any further information which he may receive on this question will be issued as an addendum to the present report.
