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

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Wednesday, 23 June 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairman:

Mr. DONIGI

(Papua New Guinea)

CONTENTS

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR

Hearing of petitioners

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

REQUESTS FOR HEARINGS

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to a request for a hearing on the question of East Timor, which had been circulated in aide-mémoire 8/89/Add.2. He took it that the Committee wished to grant the request.

2. It was so decided.

QUESTION OF EAST TIMOR (A/AC.109/1999/10)

Hearing of petitioners

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Ede (Australians for a Free East Timor) took a place at the petitioners' table.

4. Mr. EDE (Australians for a Free East Timor) said that the signing on 5 May 1999 of the Agreement between Indonesia and Portugal on the question of East Timor (A/53/951-S/1999/513) contravened the spirit and letter of the law that regulated the status of East Timor by allowing the Indonesian military oppressors, the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI), to be responsible for security before, during and after the holding of the referendum. Portugal had indicated that the Agreement was an aperture in the political process, but that had not proven true. In January 1999, President Habibie had agreed to grant East Timor the possibility of independence; the ensuing two months had been relatively calm and hopeful. Since then, however, TNI had committed gross and massive violations of human rights, including the creation of militias that supplied murderers for the death squads.

5. Australians for a Free East Timor was strenuously opposed to allowing Indonesia to monitor elections in East Timor, because it would allow TNI to monitor election security. Made up of liars, murderers and abusers of human rights, TNI sought merely to deny the East Timorese a free and fair referendum that would determine their future. The United Nations should monitor the disputed Territory while the wishes of the East Timorese were determined in an impartial manner.

6. During the negotiations conducted in late 1998 by Mr. Marker, the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for East Timor, Australians for a Free East Timor had sent messages to the United Nations imploring it to send peacekeepers to East Timor to preserve lives, protect human rights, facilitate the process of self-determination, and oversee the completion, long overdue, of the decolonization process. Australians for a Free East Timor had also called on the United Nations to impose military and financial sanctions on Indonesia until all troops had returned to their barracks. It had requested the Secretary-General to withdraw his support for autonomy, to demand the departure of all Indonesian troops, to deploy peacekeepers, and to ensure to the East Timorese people the free exercise of their right to self-determination, which must include the possibility of independence.

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7. An historic forum on the future of East Timor, held in Dili on 6 June 1999 and attended by 2,000 persons, had demanded the following: the immediate release of all political prisoners, among them Mr. Xanana Gusmão; an interim joint administration agreed upon by Portugal and Indonesia; the removal of TNI militias from East Timor; the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces; and preparations for a referendum.

8. Australians for a Free East Timor endorsed those requests, and called on the Secretary-General immediately to establish a clear mandate that would permit the strong and continued presence of United Nations peacekeeping forces. A referendum conducted in an environment designed to induce the East Timorese to vote in favour of Indonesia so as to diminish the threat of violence against them would be invalid and would not remove East Timor from the international agenda.

9. Mr. Ede withdrew.

10. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Mewengkang took a place at the petitioners' table.

11. Mr. MEWENGKANG said that, as a resident of Northern Celebes and an Indonesian citizen, he wished to state that the matter of East Timor had been falsely reported. He felt a great sympathy for the East Timorese, who shared with the people of Northern Celebes not only the same island, but also the same culture and a similar colonial history. After the departure of Portugal, the East Timorese had been left to fend for themselves in a civil war with the Fretilin minority, which had been armed by the Portuguese. East Timor, moreover, had entirely lacked infrastructure, and transportation, communications, housing, health and education were severely inadequate. The majority had chosen to achieve independence by joining with Indonesia. The ousted Fretilin minority, having fled abroad, continued to preach propaganda against that country. The Indonesian Government had nonetheless been unflagging in its determination to work towards the achievement of a just solution, and had put forward a proposal to grant East Timor wide-ranging autonomy. It had later also proposed that if East Timor did not wish autonomy, it could choose independence. In his view, the people of Indonesia and East Timor should not be divided. Autonomy was the preferable choice, since it would permit the East Timorese to choose their own form of governance, as well as their own laws and regulations, and to develop their own economy and culture. Not only would autonomy end the suffering of East Timor, but it would allow the East Timorese and the Indonesians to grow together as one nation.

12. Mr. Mewengkang withdrew.

13. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Sternberg (Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace) took a place at the petitioners' table.

14. Ms. STERNBERG (Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace), speaking on behalf of Bishop Otsuka, said that he had recently received a letter from a missionary in East Timor imploring him to send as many people as possible to that Territory because the Indonesian militias were committing sadistic cruelties against the East Timorese villagers, in the manner of Pol Pot or

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Hitler. The moment called not for discussion, but for listening and for rendering justice. In his view, the peace process and the Agreement of 5 May 1999 had been fatally flawed by the lack of participation by the East Timorese. A young leader of the East Timorese clandestine movement had written the Japan Catholic Council a letter stating that they could not understand why the international community treated the Indonesian army as though it were a neutral party, since the East Timor conflict was a military and political conflict between the people of East Timor and the Indonesian Government. Regrettably, such cries had been ignored by the world community, with the exception of a number of small non-governmental organizations. The Agreement of 5 May 1999 had also been flawed by the decision to place the responsibility for security in the hands of the Indonesian Government, which had, in fact, resulted in an escalation of violence. Determined action must now be taken to remedy those fatal flaws.

15. The Japan Catholic Council supported a set of proposals which a group of Japanese bishops had recently enclosed in a letter to the Secretary-General: first, that individual countries should be requested to send civilian police to East Timor; second, that the Indonesian Government should be requested to disarm both its military forces and the militias operating under their protection, and to bring to justice all members of those bodies who were terrorizing the civilian population; third, that if the Indonesian Government was unwilling to carry out its obligations, a peacekeeping operation should be established; and fourth, that the Indonesian Government should be urged to allow international parliamentarians, non-governmental organizations and volunteer delegations to assist in monitoring the referendum.

16. The long-suffering people of East Timor must not see the century close without drinking from the precious cup of justice so long denied them.

17. Ms. Sternberg withdrew.

18. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Sutandar took a place at the petitioners' table.

19. Mr. SUTANDAR said that, as an Indonesian physician in cardiology training in the United States, he wished to state that the Portuguese legacy to the people of East Timor had been poverty, isolation and severely inadequate health and education infrastructure. In the years since the Indonesian Government had taken charge of East Timor, the number of hospitals and medical clinics had substantially increased. In fact, the Indonesian health service made a practice of dispatching physicians to underserved regions after their graduation from medical school. Although the physicians that served East Timor were paid little, they took pride in having improved the quality of life for the people of that Territory. Unfortunately, as newspapers had recently reported, the pro-independence movement had terrorized health-care providers, hindering the provision of services. In his view, the United Nations and the Government of Indonesia should endeavour to ensure that, as the referendum approached, conflicting factions did not erupt into violence. The East Timorese people should have the right to choose their own form of governance, as well as their own laws and regulations. Since they shared a common history and culture, it was natural that East Timor would wish to be part of Indonesia. Regrettably,

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elements of the pro-independence movement were resorting to terror and violence in pursuit of unclear goals. The Indonesian people knew that such a path led only to destruction. Tolerance, mutual cooperation and understanding were essential: to err was human, but to forgive was divine.

20. Mr. Sutandar withdrew.

21. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Wisnuwardhana (New York City Chapter of the Indonesian Student Association) took a place at the petitioners' table.

22. Mr. WISNUWARDHANA (New York City Chapter of the Indonesian Student Association) said that the Agreement of 5 May 1999 had opened a path for a just and comprehensive solution to the question of East Timor, since the East Timorese would thereby be given the opportunity to decide whether or not to accept autonomy. In 1975, after the Portuguese had irresponsibly abandoned East Timor, the East Timorese people had proclaimed their independence from Portugal by becoming part of Indonesia. The Government of his country had done its utmost to find a proper and internationally acceptable solution. If the Portuguese Government had not reneged on some of its agreements, the tripartite dialogue under way since 1983 might well have reached a satisfactory conclusion. In the current climate of reform, not only was Indonesia prepared to grant the East Timorese a special status with greater autonomous powers, but it had announced its willingness to part from East Timor if a popular referendum so determined. Though he did not question the suffering of the East Timorese, he would like to remind them that they and other Indonesians had fought for independence from the same colonial Power. It was their responsibility as fellow Indonesians to join in building Indonesian society. He was amazed by the audacity of the former colonial Powers, which, having abandoned Indonesians, now wished to divide them. He appealed to the East Timorese to pause and consider. Although he would be grateful to have the East Timorese as his Indonesian brothers and sisters, he could also accept them as cooperative neighbours. In either event, he wished the East Timorese a peaceful future.

23. Mr. Wisnuwardhana withdrew.

24. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Fitzgerald (East Timor International Support Centre) took a place at the petitioners' table.

25. Mr. FITZGERALD (East Timor International Support Centre) said that, after a quarter century of domination, Jakarta had announced that it was prepared to grant independence to East Timor. In early May, Indonesia and Portugal had reached an Agreement which the United Nations Assistance Mission to East Timor (UNAMET) must implement. On 8 August, East Timorese would be presented with a proposal for "autonomy". If the proposal was rejected, the United Nations would oversee a transition to full independence.

26. There was little doubt that independence would be the choice of most East Timorese. Yet there was an orchestrated effort by the Indonesian armed forces to sabotage the possibility of a free and fair vote through terror and intimidation. The one-sided violence carried out by a State apparatus aiming to bring about a particular political outcome was best described as State-sponsored terrorism. It was the ultimate irony that the Indonesian military, which had

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occupied East Timor illegally for more than 23 years and had been responsible for the deaths of at least 200,000 people there, would be given responsibility for security during the ballot on 8 August.

27. Serious obstacles remained to a free and fair consultation. The Indonesian armed forces (TNI) were actively working to sabotage the vote, in direct contravention of their obligation of neutrality under the Agreement. The militias, which were trained, armed and paid by the military, still operated openly and had not been disarmed. Terror and repression were being used as a political weapon; hundreds of independence supporters had been killed, villages attacked and tens of thousands internally displaced. Threats of reprisals after the ballot were being used to intimidate the population into voting for integration with Indonesia. His organization had also observed on the ground that medical services were almost non-existent for the majority of the population, with a ratio of 1 doctor per 20,000 people.

28. The United Nations must take over responsibility for security and peace in East Timor by deploying a peacekeeping force to disarm the militias and ensure adequate conditions for the consultation. The strength of the United Nations civilian police force must be increased. If the result of the consultation was obtained through coercion, it would be meaningless. The issue of East Timor must not be removed from the agenda of the Special Committee until a free and fair vote, acceptable to all parties and international observers, and a legal and peaceful transition respecting its outcome, had occurred.

29. Mr. Fitzgerald withdrew.

30. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Regan (British Coalition for East Timor) took a place at the petitioners' table.

31. Mr. REGAN (British Coalition for East Timor) said that his organization welcomed the Agreement reached between Indonesia and Portugal under United Nations auspices, which, if implemented in a free and fair manner, would lead to self-determination for the people of East Timor. However, some of the aspects of the current situation could obstruct the prospects for self-determination for the East Timorese people. He therefore called on the United Nations to take steps to remedy the situation. In particular, the United Nations, in cooperation with Indonesia, Portugal and all other relevant nations, must achieve the following: the complete disarming of paramilitary groups in East Timor in accordance with the 5 May Agreement; an end to all participation of Indonesian Government officials in the campaign in support of the autonomy proposal; the dismissal of Eurico Guterres and all other members of paramilitary groups from the civil defence force; the immediate release of Xanana Gusmão and other East Timorese political prisoners and permission for Gusmão and for José Ramos Horta to participate in campaigning prior to the ballot; and the deployment of an armed United Nations peacekeeping force to take over security in East Timor to ensure an environment free from violence and intimidation.

32. He requested the Committee to do all it could to monitor the situation, and to send a delegation to East Timor as soon as possible to observe the situation more closely.

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33. Mr. Regan withdrew.

34. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Waisapi (Solidaridas Permuda Indonesia) took a place at the petitioners' table.

35. Mr. WAISAPI (Solidaridas Permuda Indonesia) said that some would like the international community to believe that violence in East Timor was only carried out by pro-integration groups. But there were two sides to every situation, and East Timor was no exception. The fact of the matter was that anti-integration groups could not be absolved of responsibility for the violence.

36. As an Indonesian, he had been horrified to learn of how his East Timorese brothers had been forced to leave their homes in the village of Tilomar, Kovalima, because of terror and intimidation by pro-independence groups, and to take refuge in the local church. In interviews with the local media, they had stated that they would like to return home but feared retaliation from the pro-independence supporters. Anti-integration supporters had attempted to sway the East Timorese to their cause by making exaggerated promises or by using extortion tactics.

37. After decades of occupation by the colonial Power, civil war and brutalization by pro-independence groups, the people of East Timor deserved the peace and prosperity that were rightfully theirs, and deserved to live in peace and harmony with their Indonesian brothers. They belonged to one nation and people and should remain united under the Republic of Indonesia.

38. Mr. Waisapi withdrew.

39. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Mason (Campaign for an Independent East Timor) took a place at the petitioners' table.

40. Ms. MASON (Campaign for an Independent East Timor) said that, after years of courageous struggle against a brutal and oppressive regime, the people of East Timor had earned the right to look forward confidently to a future of independence, peace and justice. The fact that they could not was a result not only of the nature of the Indonesian regime, but of the policy of appeasement towards its leaders adopted by many Western democracies. The United Nations had never recognized the illegal Indonesian takeover of East Timor, and, because of the history of the Suharto/Habibie regime, Indonesia should have been excluded from the referendum process. It had already attempted to change the date of the referendum and to terrorize the population into accepting integration. Furthermore, the question being voted on had been decided by Indonesia and Portugal, without input from representatives from East Timor.

41. Giving Indonesia responsibility for security in the Territory was as illogical and as callous as putting the Nazi military in charge of populations it had butchered during the Second World War. The presence of the Indonesian military in the Territory was illegal, and if the regime was acting in good faith, Eurico Guterres would be in jail facing charges for murder rather than taking responsibility for security in Dili during the referendum. Members of UNAMET had observed militia groups being directed by Indonesian army soldiers,

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and further, money from aid programmes intended to meet humanitarian needs had been used to organize pro-integration rallies.

42. The Indonesian regime was not acting in good faith and did not intend to. Governments which gave credence to its propaganda called into question their own credibility. Many Western democratic Governments had spoken out in favour of human rights in East Timor, yet their actions frequently indicated that they were not sincere. The United Kingdom, the United States of America and Australia continued to provide arms, military equipment and cooperation to the Indonesian dictatorship.

43. The following strategies must be adopted urgently if the conditions for a fair referendum were to be attained and there was to be security after the result. First, a United Nations peacekeeping mission with the capacity to control the Indonesian military and its militias must be sent to East Timor and remain until after the referendum, the disbanding of the militias and the withdrawal of Indonesian forces. Second, international pressure - in the form of cessation of all military cooperation and all IMF, World Bank and bilateral loans - must be put on Indonesia to bring it to disarm and disband the militias and to withdraw from East Timor before the referendum. Third, Indonesia must release Xanana Gusmão and allow him and Nobel Peace laureate, José Ramos Horta to visit East Timor. Fourth, international action must be taken against those suspected of crimes against humanity, including military personnel and key politicians.

44. Ms. Mason withdrew.

45. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Ostorm (Swedish East Timor Committee) took a place at the petitioners' table.

46. Ms. OSTORM (Swedish East Timor Committee), expressing the hope that the welcome United Nations role in the decolonization of East Timor would settle the issue before the end of the century, said that the international community had to put more pressure on the Indonesian Government to end its occupation of the Territory, if the referendum scheduled for 8 August was to be held as stipulated in the Agreement of 5 May. All reports from East Timor during 1999 had told of an escalation of violence and a high death toll, even after the signing of the Agreement. Particularly alarming were the killings and threats by the paramilitary groups, atrocities to which the world media had begun to give attention. Because of the internal crisis in Indonesia as well, East Timor has become an international issue.

47. In Sweden, solidarity work for East Timor had been remarkably successful: five of the seven parties represented in Parliament opposed arms exports to Indonesia, and public opinion was even more critical. A major Swedish arms producer had even voluntarily refrained from exporting weapons to Indonesia.

48. The urgent issues were the immediate disarmament of the paramilitary groups in East Timor; the immediate withdrawal of Indonesian troops and the dispatch of more United Nations personnel to monitor their withdrawal and protect the civilian population; the immediate and unconditional release of Xanana Gusmão

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and all other political prisoners; the holding of the referendum in a free atmosphere.

49. Ms. Ostorm withdrew.

50. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Wainfeld (Indonesia Human Rights Campaign (TAPOL)) took a place at the petitioners' table.

51. Mr. WAINFELD (Indonesia Human Rights Campaign (TAPOL)) welcomed the establishment of UNAMET. It was regrettable, however, that despite the presence of UNAMET, East Timor was still under military occupation. Indeed, since the decision to hold a referendum had been taken, the operations of the Indonesian military had made it virtually impossible to conduct a referendum. UNAMET officials themselves had discovered militia groups being directed by the Indonesian military. Since January, several hundred Timorese had been killed and over 40,000 people had fled their villages, making it impossible for them even to register, let alone vote. All that was in flagrant breach of the 5 May Agreement. Indeed, the presence of large numbers of Indonesian military forces (TNI) personnel, destroyed the sense of freedom of the East Timorese.

52. Despite the Indonesian Government's announcement on 1 April 1999 that the police force, POLRI, had been separated from TNI, nothing had changed in East Timor. Under the United Nations Agreement, security for the consultation in East Timor was the responsibility of POLRI, which, unfortunately, was not a neutral force. Indeed, despite the separation, the army and police were under the command of the Department of Defence, while the Minister of Defence and TNI Commander-in-Chief were one and the same person. Events of the past few months had justified the fear that no good would come from that arrangement. Atrocities by militia groups, with the open support of commanding officers, had been documented in several areas, but none of the officers had been dismissed or brought to justice.

53. Everything must be done to keep the ballot process on track and to prevent certain forces within the elite, including the military, from derailing it. Despite the awesome provocations to which they had been subjected during the past few months, the East Timorese people had shown unprecedented restraint. Indeed, even before the United Nations Agreement had been signed, the Fuerzas Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste (FALINTIL) had been operating a de facto ceasefire. Moreover, strenuous efforts were being made by the Church and the pro-independence forces to reach a reconciliation with paramilitary groups, disarm all armed forces and agree on a code of conduct for both sides prior to and following the ballot. On 18 June, an agreement had been reached in Jakarta between leaders of the pro-independence and pro-integration forces with respect to general disarmament. There were three critical issues. First, arms should be surrendered to United Nations personnel to ensure total reliability and verifiability. Second, TNI should dismantle its territorial structure, shut down its military posts and be restricted to clearly defined areas. That should lead to the withdrawal of Indonesian troops. In that regard, FALINTIL could not be expected to hand over its weapons until such troop withdrawal was in progress. Third, the paramilitary groups should be disbanded and the tens of thousands of people now being held by them should be escorted back to their villages.

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54. In addition, the resistance leader, Xanana Gusmão, and other East Timorese political prisoners must be released without delay to be able to participate in the United Nations process. Moreover, the personal safety of pro-independence activists and human rights workers must be assured. If those conditions could not be guaranteed, the United Nations Security Council should reconsider the security arrangements and send a peacekeeping force to East Timor.

55. Mr. Wainfeld withdrew.

56. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Aparicio took a place at the petitioners' table.

57. Mr. APARICIO, speaking as a high-school teacher in East Timor, said that there had been a vicious campaign of misinformation regarding the security situation in East Timor, which was stable thanks to a number of steps taken by the Government of Indonesia. It had established the Commission on Peace and Stability, comprising pro-integration and pro-independence members and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church in Dili, the military and the police, and human rights organizations. The Commission had called for the surrender of arms by the rival groups, for the renunciation of violence and for voter registration prior to the referendum. The Government had also established two task forces to implement the Agreement of 5 May. For their part, the bishops of East Timor were planning to call a meeting to reconcile the various groups in the province, which would surely have a salutary impact.

58. As a result of such endeavours, the security situation in East Timor had vastly improved, and the referendum should proceed smoothly. The expectation was that, in turn, UNAMET would remain neutral in discharging its mandate and demonstrate a sense of responsibility to the people of East Timor.

59. Mr. Aparicio withdrew.

60. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Mendonça took a place at the petitioners' table.

61. Mr. MENDONÇA, speaking as an East Timorese student in Iowa, said there was no doubt that the 5 May Agreement would have been unattainable without the proposals put forward by the Indonesian Government. In line with that Agreement, Indonesia had taken significant steps to bring peace and harmony to East Timor and to establish a climate conducive to the popular consultation. Indonesia's actions were to be commended in the light of the many impediments to implementation. In the past few weeks, the security situation had improved considerably and, while isolated acts of violence had been perpetrated by anti-integration groups in their effort to subvert the aspirations of the East Timorese people, no open clashes had taken place. That was due to the firm action and control of the security forces, which had taken effective preventive measures.

62. In line with the Agreement, the Indonesian Government had established a task force to act as a go-between between it and UNAMET prior to the popular consultation. A Commission on Peace and Stability had also been established,

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which had adopted a code of conduct with the participation of both pro-integration and anti-integration groups.

63. Mr. MENDONÇA withdrew.

64. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. PEREIRA took a place at the petitioners' table.

65. Mr. PEREIRA, speaking in his personal capacity, said that the Agreement on East Timor was a significant development that had been welcomed by the people of East Timor. The question of East Timor had been on the Special Committee's agenda for far too long, especially since the East Timorese people had never considered the issue to be one of decolonization. Nevertheless, the Indonesian Government must be lauded for its good faith in negotiating with the Portuguese Government. The offer of special autonomy reflected the flexibility of the Indonesian Government in its efforts to accommodate the views of both pro-integration and pro-independence factions.

66. The choice of special autonomy for East Timor would not only end the conflict in the Territory, but would also allow its people to focus their efforts on development. In that connection, the Indonesian Government had spared no efforts to ensure the development of the East Timorese people in all areas. The East Timorese people had always had the constitutional right to elect their representatives, while more funds had been made available to develop the Territory than had been allocated for the development of other provinces of Indonesia. Great strides had also been achieved in the economic sphere. In a nutshell, the East Timorese were of the view that their future was intertwined with that of Indonesia. They sought the support of the international community to ensure that the Agreement would be fully implemented.

67. Mr. PEREIRA withdrew.

68. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. da Cruz Leite took a place at the petitioners' table.

69. Mr. da CRUZ LEITE, speaking in his personal capacity, said that considerable misinformation had been put out about the security situation in East Timor. The reports that the situation on the ground was not conducive to the holding of a popular consultation were simply false. The Commission on Peace and Stability had become fully operational; it was composed of representatives of pro-integration as well as anti-integration groups. One of the most significant achievements had been the signing of the disarmament agreement at the Indonesian Ministry of Justice. The agreement called, inter alia, on the followers of both rival groups to lay down their arms and to cease carrying out violent acts. All the followers of both groups had also been urged to participate in voter registration prior to the holding of the popular consultation.

70. The combination of those efforts and others, including the efforts at reconciliation organized by the two bishops of East Timor and the activities of the task forces established by the Indonesian Government, had succeeded in improving the security situation. The support of the Special Committee on

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decolonization was very vital in that regard. He urged UNAMET to carry out its mandate in a fair and impartial manner, because the best efforts of all parties concerned were essential to the successful implementation of the Agreement of 5 May.

71. Mr. da Cruz Leite withdrew.

72. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Pinto took a place at the petitioners' table.

73. Ms. PINTO, speaking as a high-school teacher in East Timor, said that for the majority of the East Timorese people, the option of wide-ranging autonomy was the best solution to the situation in the Territory. It reflected the Indonesian Government's sincere desire to seek a peaceful solution to the question of East Timor. In supplementing the 5 May Agreement, the Government had taken a number of actions, including the establishment of task forces to carry out specific duties, and had expressed its willingness to cooperate fully in effectively fulfilling its mandate. In that regard, the impartiality of UNAMET personnel was vital to establishing the appropriate atmosphere for the popular consultation.

74. Although the situation in East Timor was calm and peaceful, there had been incidents where teachers had been intimidated into leaving. That had caused a vacuum at a time when education was vital to the Territory's development efforts. The false information that had been disseminated should be rejected. The people of East Timor wished to begin a new chapter in which they would be able to coexist harmoniously with their Indonesian brothers.

75. Ms. Pinto withdrew.

76. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. de Oliveira took a place at the petitioners' table.

77. Ms. de OLIVEIRA, speaking in her personal capacity, commended the Indonesian Government for working tirelessly to find a comprehensive settlement to the question of East Timor. The wide-ranging autonomy proposed by Indonesia took into account the views of both opposing factions and contained all the elements necessary for bringing an end to the conflict among East Timorese. She hailed the establishment by the Indonesian Government of a task force to ensure the safe and orderly implementation of the Agreement and another task force to act as a link between UNAMET and the Government of Indonesia. Credit for the recent improvement in the security situation on the ground was largely due to the Indonesian Government's efforts. In the meantime, both pro-integration and anti-integration factions had participated in the Commission on Peace and Stability, agreeing to lay down their arms, cease hostilities and maintain law and order. She fervently hoped that UNAMET and its personnel would refrain from taking sides and do their utmost to ensure the successful conclusion of their mandate.

78. Ms. de Oliveira withdrew.

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79. At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Farid (Agir pour Timor) took a place at the petitioners' table.

80. Ms. FARID (Agir pour Timor) said that her organization, founded in France to defend the right of the East Timorese to self-determination, regretted that representatives of the people had not participated in drawing up the Agreement of 5 May, although it was aware of the prevailing political conditions. It supported the action and the attitude taken by UNAMET thus far.

81. The fairness of the coming referendum was in serious doubt. The Indonesian army was still in control in East Timor, where it maintained a force of up to 30,000. The army had incited pro-Indonesian militias to massacre and terrorize the population, herd people into camps and threaten UNAMET personnel. Only a massive reduction of its military troops would show that the Indonesian Government was committed to the Agreement of 5 May and to the right of the East Timorese to self-determination. Instead, it had sizably increased its police force without a corresponding reduction of military personnel.

82. The small contingent of UNAMET personnel would have difficulty imposing itself in disarming all the parties concerned and monitoring the proper conduct of the balloting in the approximately 700 polling places to be set up. Consequently, her organization, together with other French non-governmental organizations, was taking part in an international project to send volunteer observers, coordinated by the International Federation for East Timor. The observers would make it their mission to accompany, upon request, any prominent East Timorese who felt threatened; to monitor the human rights situation and publicize violations; and to monitor the proper conduct of the referendum and the aftermath to the referendum.

83. The French Parliament had proposed the creation of a working group on East Timor, and her organization had joined others in supporting that initiative.

84. Ms. Farid withdrew.

85. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Fietkiewicz (Catholic Institute for International Relations) took a place at the petitioners' table.

86. Mr. FIETKIEWICZ (Catholic Institute for International Relations), noting that his London-based conflict-resolution and advocacy organization had striven to give international focus to the message of the Christian Churches inside East Timor for almost a quarter of a century, said that the conditions did not yet seem to be in place for the referendum of 8 August. Although the current Government of Indonesia had been courageous in its willingness to countenance change, making possible the Agreement concluded with Portugal on 5 May, recent events had also highlighted the degree to which Indonesia's military establishment was opposed to change and to a fair and peaceful popular consultation. The cost continued to be borne by the East Timorese in terms of blood and lives: reports from the Catholic Church over the past six months had indicated an appalling deterioration in security. There was little doubt that the Indonesian army was sponsoring East Timorese militia groups in a proxy war against pro-independence supporters. Intimidation was widespread and blatant. Reputable human rights organizations like Amnesty International believed that

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over 300 had died since January. Reliable Catholic Church sources had told of unspeakable acts of violence and murder. The leaders of the militia groups responsible for documented outrages in various towns had been allowed by the Indonesian authorities to enjoy total impunity; one, the leader of a Dili-based militia who had publicly incited his forces to murder, had, instead of being arrested, been made chief of the civilian defence force. That was in direct contravention of the Agreement, which demanded the absolute neutrality of the Indonesian army and police force.

87. The supporters of independence, far from being allowed to campaign openly for the option they favoured, as permitted by all democratic societies, were receiving death threats, being forced to go into hiding and being refused the right to have their leaders, such as Xanana Gusmão and José Ramos Horta, return home at such an important time. East Timorese leaders declared repeatedly that they were capable of resolving their differences if only the Indonesian army would stop sowing division and hatred. The military must now withdraw from East Timor and stop arming, paying and training the militias, so that the popular consultation could move forward in peace. Christian Church leaders in East Timor were trying in every possible way to facilitate peacemaking, realizing that reconciliation was crucial to the regeneration of society. The Church did not believe that the East Timorese people had yet been given the space, free from interference, that was necessary to achieve peace; or that the political processes needed to establish a new governmental mechanism in East Timor with which the people would be willing to cooperate had been set in motion.

88. His organization asked the Committee to make clear to the Indonesian armed forces that they must end their sponsorship of the violence. It further asked the Committee to send its own mission to the Territory to observe the process at first hand. The East Timorese had made a start on a strategic development plan for the country in the event that independence was granted later in 1999. The international community, and especially the Indonesian Government, must now make absolutely certain that they were allowed to proceed, by ensuring that the popular consultation took place, without any further loss of life, in a way that was free and fair.

89. Mr. Fietkiewicz withdrew.

90. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Hoffman (Solidarity Forum with the People of East Timor (FORTILOS)) took a place at the petitioners' table.

91. Mr. HOFFMAN (Solidarity Forum with the People of East Timor (FORTILOS)) said that his organization had circulated a petition throughout all regions of Indonesia demanding that the Indonesian military should disarm the pro-integration militias and end its campaign of violence and intimidation against the East Timorese people. It further demanded that the United Nations should take firmer action in redressing the failure of the Indonesian military and police to provide safety and security to the East Timorese. By that petition it hoped to encourage the United Nations in its efforts to fulfil the terms of the Agreement of 5 May and to criticize violations of those terms by the Indonesian military police. Not all Indonesian citizens were supportive of or indifferent to the crimes being committed in East Timor in the name of the Indonesian nation. The petition had thus far been signed by over 2,000 persons

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in nearly every province of the country, in small towns and big cities and far-flung islands, and from all walks of life and a variety of religions.

92. Since the Indonesian Government and military showed no sign of ending their commitment to a violent resolution of the question of East Timor, FORTILOS would continue to circulate the petition until the United Nations held the popular consultation in August.

93. Mr. Hoffman withdrew.

94. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Purga (Forum Pemuda-Pemudi Indonesia) took a place at the petitioners' table.

95. Mr. PURGA (Forum Pemuda-Pemudi Indonesia) said that the security situation in East Timor had been inaccurately portrayed by groups deliberately pursuing narrow political agendas. A misleading picture had been given of terror and violence by the pro-integration groups, and the Indonesian armed forces had been slandered as to their role in East Timor. That was hindering the implementation of the Agreement of 5 May.

96. He reviewed the historical causes of the deep divisions between the two opposing sides of East Timorese society, from the colonial period up until East Timor had achieved independence through integration with Indonesia. On the eve of the popular consultation, the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the East Timorese people should be supported. The Indonesian armed forces were in East Timor to protect the people, and were carrying out their important civic missions under extremely difficult conditions. They were exercising the utmost restraint in curtailing the terror tactics of the pro-independence supporters. It was a convenient ploy to blame the military for tensions dating from the colonial period that continued to run high between the opposing pro-integration and pro-independence factions. The armed forces had managed to maintain neutrality.

97. The well-orchestrated media were wrongly focusing on the conduct of the Indonesian armed forces while neglecting to show the terror and intimidation tactics of the pro-independence elements, which had taken a more violent turn since the Government had launched the initiative for the referendum. The anti-integration groups had sought unsuccessfully to sabotage the recent national general elections, and were now trying to force the people to reject the autonomy proposal and opt for independence. Professionals were being harassed and forced to flee, leaving a vacuum in much-needed services to East Timor.

98. It was a time for restraint and reconciliation, so that the Agreement for which Indonesia had so tirelessly worked would result in a solution for East Timor.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.