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TOWARDS A PEACEFUL WAY TO THE EAST TIMOR CONFLICT

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Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

This has been such a prestigious privilege for me being invited by the Netherlands Institute of International Relations "Clingendael" and the Portuguese Institute for Strategic and International Studies whom I accept the invitation with deep gratitude and appreciation. I strongly believe that this important event will bring some fruitful discussions (towards the less or misleading information) about East Timor.

As I have been given the opportunity to convey my views here, I should say clearly that I am speaking not merely as an observer but as well as a person who has devoted life and career for 14 years in East Timor in a total of 33 long years in military service. This vast experience has enabled me to develop personal and professional great attachments to the people and land of East Timor, a place which I admire sincerely with deepest respect and affections

My career has been spent in serving both at the military units as well as in the local government in East Timor. During the early years, I was the Assistant for Economic and People's Welfare, then as Secretary to the Provincial Administration and later as Vice Governor to East Timor Province which led to my retirement in military service in August 1998. Therefore my presence here is not as the representative of the Indonesian Armed Forces but

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based solely on my personal capacity, where I hope to present my honest opinion on the many questions and issues regarding East Timor.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The East Timor saga began some 2 decades ago, when a popular revolt in Portugal, commonly known as "the Flower Revolution" of April 1974, set in motion a process of decolonization for Portugal's overseas territories. In East Timor, this led to the creation of a number of political parties, each aspiring a different vision for East Timor's future : UDT (which wanted to form a Confederation with Portugal), ASDT which later became Fretilin (who wanted to form an independent East Timor state), AITI which later became Apodeti (which sought to integrate with Indonesia), and Kota and Trabalhista (which then had the same aspiration as UDT).

At first, these political groups competed peacefully. At some point, however, the Portuguese Government through their Governor in East Timor Lemos Pires began to take side by supporting Fretilin, and soon enough lethal arms were irresponsibly transferred by the Portuguese militia to Fretilin soldiers. Before long, a vicious civil war exploded among the East Timorese political groups, leaving a deep trauma upon the East Timorese people which remains today. With much lesser arms at their disposal, the other four parties found themselves cornered, and requested arms from Indonesia but to no avail. On 25 August 1975, Governor Lemos Pires abandoned East Timor, leaving a complete power vacuum. Meanwhile members of the four political parties along with tens of thousands

refugees fled to safety in Indonesian territory in Atambua. They consolidated in Indonesian territory and on 7 December 1975 they returned to East Timor aided with Indonesian volunteers.

The participation of the Indonesian volunteers assistance were given due to the request made by the four East Timorese political parties – UDT, APODETI, Kota and Trabalhista-comprising the majority of the people of East Timor, after having declared their desire to integrate with Indonesia while rejecting an earlier unilateral "declaration of independence" by Fretilin.

OPERATION TO RESTORE SECURITY

Since East Timor integrated with Indonesia in 1976, the Government has launched a number of military operations to restore security ("Operasi Pemulihan Keamanan"). Initially, these operations focused on combat activities, in view of the fact that the Fretilins continued to wage a guerrilla war against the people of East Timor armed with lethal weapons. During this time there were casualties on both sides, be they from anti Fretilin or Fretilin forces, and also among their supporters. It was a "kill or be killed" situation. Apart from combat operations, the military also conducted territorial activities, which means engaging in civic duties to help the population in development-related areas. Finally, those who returned from the mountains were welcomed, reintegrated with society and now live freely among the people.

In 1978, a general amnesty was issued. A cease-fire was agreed in 1983 between the Indonesian military and Fretilin to give way to a

peaceful settlement of the East Timor issue. Unfortunately, this good intention was ruined by the Fretilin guerrillas when they attacked the Claras village in Viqueque, which claimed serious casualties.

It did not take long before the Fretilin ceased to be a serious military threat in East Timor. Since 1989, the focus of military operations shifted to territorial operations, aiming to assist the local government to upgrade people's welfare through civic duties. Some combat operations occurred from time to time, but on a much lesser scale and intensity. In 1991, during the provocation's in connection with the abortive visit of the Portuguese and UN Parliamentarians to Dili, the incident of 12 November 1991 occurred, which none of us wanted. This was serious setback for Indonesia. The Government dealt with the incident by setting up a National Commission for Enquiry, the first of its kind, which was tasked thoroughly investigate the incident. On the basis of their findings, the Government acted to bring those responsible for the incident to trial and sentenced them to prison terms.

There in no denying that there has been officers who went against the rules of conduct. This is indeed very unfortunate. However, these problems often cannot be wished away so easily, in the same way we cannot wish a way violations by other citizens. That is why it is important to uphold the law, and to make it accountable for everybody. We are doing our best to control and minimize these violations.

DEVELOPMENT :

While security and stability was important, the Government's main attention and purpose was actually focused on conducting extensive development programs to uplift the welfare of the people of East Timor, who had been underdeveloped as a result of 450 years of Portuguese colonialism.

In general, development efforts in East Timor can be categorized as follows :

Under Governor Arnaldo Dos Reis Araujo (1976-1978) : The stage of rehabilitation in the aftermath of the civil war by conducting urgent measures for food provision, housing and medicine.

Under Governor Guilherme Maria Gonzalves (1976-1982) : The stage of consolidation and rehabilitation, to continue the rehabilitation stage.

Under Governor Mario Carrascalao (1982-1992) : Crash program. The implementation of the Fourth Five Year Development Plan (Pelita IV, 1984-89), which prioritized agriculture; health; education; public works; improvement of Government apparatus. This was followed by the Fifth Five Year Development Plan (Pelita V, 1989-1994), with the same priority, which is "village development".

Under Governor Abilio Osorio Soares (1992-now) : implementation of Pelita VI (1994-1998), with priority areas as follows : integration, unity, youth development and caderization, the role of three pillars and intellectuals, jobs and social issue.

The result of these sustained and planned development efforts has been good :

- *Agricultural sector*

Agricultural production has been enhanced

- *Health sector*

In 1975 most health centers (Puskesmas) were only found in the regencies or districts, but now they have spread to the village level by the development of assistant primary health care centers (Puskesmas Pembantu).

- *Education sector*

The number of schools has dramatically increased. In 1975, there were only a few elementary, junior high and senior high schools and only 10 University graduates. In 1997, in every village there has been an elementary, every district there is a junior high and senior high numbering more than 50. There are now thousands of East Timorese University graduates.

- *Public work.*

The asphalt road in 1975 were only 20 km long, now it is more than 1000 km.

- *Economic sector*

The people's buying power has risen from income per capita of USD 40,000 in 1975 to Rp. 900,000 in 1998.

- *Man power sector*

There is a substantial number of East Timorese who have become government officials and holding important positions.

- Beside the six sectors mentioned above there are some development of other sectors which cannot be detailed here.

Nonetheless, there are some shortcomings

- The development concept is more top down rather than bottom up, which some times hampers efforts to meet the people's need efficiently.
- There has been some injustices, resulting in social gaps, especially in the cities.
- There was a lack of appreciation that East Timor has distinct characteristics, which requires special treatment.

In short, the development of East Timor from 1976 now should be seen in a holistic perspective. In general, the results have benefited the people of East Timor, although there remains shortcomings which should be rectified in the future.

RELATED ISSUES :

It is difficult to talk about the East Timor without touching on issues frequently posed by the media and the NGOs. Some of these questions are valid, but others are posed more in the context of a propaganda war and therefore are either innuendoes, half-truths or fictional. I would like to briefly touch on these issues.

"Indonesia is colonizing East Timor"

If Indonesia is occupying East Timor, it makes no sense for them to allocate so much resources to

conduct development on a vast scale in East Timor to enhance the dignity and welfare of its people. Indonesia has built the human resources of East Timor producing over 1,000 University graduates, and has fundamentally improved the economy and well-being of the people of that half-island, though much remains to be done. The Government and military have done this with the best of intentions, because the East Timorese is part of the Indonesian nation and because human dignity is as much as their natural birthright as is to other Indonesians.

"Islamization"

There is simply no such thing as "Islamization" in East Timor. There is nothing to be gained by it, as Indonesia, even though it has the world's largest Moslem population, is not an Islamic state and indeed with freedom of religion Catholicism has long been a state-sponsored religion. Indeed, if any religion were to show the most rapid development in East Timor, it is Catholicism. In 1975, Catholics comprised only a mere 27 % of the whole population of the territory. Today, this has grown dramatically to 90% of the population. This is mainly due to the development efforts launched by Government and the Catholic Church. For example, one of the civic missions of Military activities is to build a church in nearly every village. Moreover, with roads built down to village level, the priests can easily reach those in remote areas and to baptize them. It also matters that the issuance of permits for foreign priests were made easy.

"Family Planning"

There has been many allegations about the conduct of family planning programs in East Timor, such as "force sterilization" etc. The fact is that family planning in East Timor is focused on natural methods, which explains why population growth in East Timor is rather high. This method has indeed been agreed by the Catholic church and a number of East Timorese priests and sisters have conducted comparative studies with other provinces.

"Transmigration"

It is also untrue that the transmigration program in East Timor has flooded the province with migrants. "Transmigration" is a nation-wide program to tackle poverty and provide economic empowerment to power by resettling people, on voluntary basis, from densely populated areas mainly Java and Bali to sparsely populated areas. In 1981, transmigration settlements comprised of 50 % of local East Timorese and the rest were those from the outside. This pattern was then changed to comprise 100 % locals. In 1992, in view of the need for technology sharing, this composition was again modified to comprise 75 % East Timorese to 25 % from other provinces. But with the 25 %, emphasis was given to those transmigration with similar culture and religion, preferably Catholics, Until 1998, the number transmigration from other provinces in East Timor (With a population of 900.000) numbered 1250 families or about 5,000 lives.

"Human Right Violations"

I am the first to admit that human right violations have occurred in East Timor. There is no need to hide this matter. Yet it must be made clear that none of these violations are wanted by, let alone policy of, the Government and Military. In many cases, these violation resulted from provocation done by pro-referendum activists. Thus, in my experience, in every instance of human rights violations, the Provincial Government of East Timor always pushed the local military commander to discipline and punish his officers who committed wrongdoing in accordance with the laws.

EAST TIMOR IN THE REFORM ERA :

The sentiments of the people of East Timor are intrinsically linked to their traumatic experience during the civil war. However, the shades of opinion in East Timor is more complex than generally perceived. If we talk to those who are pro-integration whose families were murdered during the civil war, they will tell you that integration is the only way.

Conversely, if we listen to the pro-independence groups who have been in conflict with pro-integration group since 1976, especially those whose family were killed during the war, their will call for independence. Even within the pro-integration groups there are different feeling. There are some who are resentful at those who have extracted the fruits of integration better than others. There are those whose ties have been severed due to differences of opinion. There are also pro-independence activists who have found a better life and hence no longer resists integration.

Or those who resist integration but only moderately. Then there are the guerrillas who are still in the hills their hard-line views, and their arms.

These sentiments prevail mainly to those who live in the cities. In my observation, however, the people who live in the villages hold a different view. Generally, the basic needs of the people in the villages have been met, such as food, housing, drinking water, medicine, schooling, and as such they are least affected by the politicians and intellectuals. But for those whose village were burnt or family members killed by the pro-independence groups. They will definitely condemn those who are pro-independence. Similarly, those whose rights were violated by the pro-integration groups will curse integration.

Some comments are required about the Catholic Church in East Timor. There is a misperception among some as if the Catholic Church is against integration and against the Government of Indonesia and takes political side with the separatists. This is untrue, for the Catholic Church actually wishes to stay neutral. What is true is that they do not want violence and wish to see a peaceful solution to the conflict in East Timor.

The Church judges each and every situation on a case-by-case basis. If the pro-independence reports on a particular human right violation case, the church will surely be sympathetic to them. Similarly, if the church sees a village being burnt with extreme brutality by separatists, the church will be sympathetic to pro-integration. Hence, the position of the church is to

embrace all and to look after all, and they do not as a matter of principle take political side.

AUTONOMY OR REFERENDUM

Since the change of Government in Indonesia from President Soeharto to President B.J. Habibie, the policy of Indonesia on the East Timor issue has experienced dramatic development. This began in June 1998 when the Indonesia Government announced that it willing to consider the granting of "*special status with wide-ranging autonomy*" for East Timor as part and parcel of the final settlement to the East Timor question. This proposal was officially conveyed by Foreign Minister Ali Alatas to the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in mid-June 1998. On the basis of this, the tripartite dialogue between the Indonesia and Portugues Foreign Ministers under the auspices of the UN Secretary General were resumed in New York on 4-5 August 1998, and they agreed to continue to discuss the substantive elements of the autonomy proposal "without prejudice to their basic positions of principle" They also expressed their hope to reach an agreement on this issue by the end of this year.

It my view that this proposal is the best chance for a peaceful and long-lasting solution to the East Timor question. The idea of autonomy had been around prior to the area of reformation. In 1994, Bishop Belo wrote a pastoral letter expressing his fear that referendum would lead to a bloody civil war proposed, as an alternative solution, the establishment of autonomy in the area as a way to settle the East Timor question. Around that time, many officials from foreign

Government visiting East Timor also stated that the best way to settle the East Timor question in the international forum was to grant the area a special autonomy.

This special status is indeed compatible with the distinct feature of the area and people of East Timor, which differ from the rest of Indonesia be they in terms of development needs, social structure, local economy, educational, culture, and so on. Although the detail of the Indonesia autonomy concept is yet to be formalized in the tripartite agreement, it is understood that such an autonomy will grant vast powers to the east Timorese for internal self-government, except in areas relating to foreign policy, external defense, and monetary and fiscal policies which will remain under the jurisdiction of the central Government. It is also understood that the autonomy which will be put in place in East Timor will be set according to international standards and norms, thus not along the lines of (Indonesia "special districts" of) Yogyakarta or Aceh as has been incorrectly perceived by some quarters.

I have high hopes that the autonomy solution will prevail as the most realistic and constructive solution to the East Timor conflict. Autonomy presents a win-win solution, one which produces no loser and allows all sides to claim victory. The challenge now is how to accommodate the aspiration of the people of East Timor, in particular the conflicting parties, into the model and details of such a autonomy. For all their differences, both the pro-integration and pro-

independent groups yearn for self-government, and this is what "wide ranging autonomy" readily delivers.

The strength of the autonomy proposal (win-win solution) contrast with the weakness of the referendum (win-lose solution). Due to the variety of the people's and the high emotions involved in this political conflict particularly in light of the trauma from the civil war not long ago, the greatest concern with regard to referendum is that it would lead to heightened tension, increased polarization community and especially by the people of Indonesia.

We should avoid at all cost returning to the episode of the mid-1970's.

Referendum produces winners and losers. The loser will most likely not accept the result of the referendum. They will react, and pose a new challenge to the winner. As a result, conflict, instead of being settled, is prolonged. While the dynamics of the affair may have changed, the whole context of conflict and animosity in tact. The real loser will be the people of East Timor, who will suffer indefinitely. In short, a referendum will not achieve the peace which is the ultimate objective of the settlement.

Ultimately, the tripartite dialogue between Indonesia and Portugal must be able to produce a settlement which not only is in the interest of the East Timorese but is also supported by them. This is why it is very important for the tripartite process to be in touch with the East Timorese. I am happy to see that this has indeed been acknowledged in the last dialogue (4-5 August 1998 in New York), in that the two Foreign

Ministers agreed for a closer involvement of the East Timorese people in the process to find a solution and, in line with this, requested the office of the UN Secretary-General to hold regular consultations with East Timorese from all shades of opinion within and outside East Timor to inform them of development in the tripartite talks and also to absorb their views as inputs to the negotiations-in other word, an interactive process. I am particularly heartened to learn that Foreign Minister Ali Alatas held a meeting with pro-referendum (as well as pro-integration) figures in Bali recently (15 October 1998) to discuss the autonomy proposal. From what I heard, the meeting went very well. I am confident that through an honest and constructive dialogue, armed with goodwill and the spirit to compromise, a solution to this long-standing issue will not be far off.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Finally, I thank you warm heartily for your patient and tolerance in sharing this information with me. I do hope it will be used thoroughly in this deliberation of meeting in order to make an eternal peaceful climate in East Timor. Your thoughts and comments are very much appreciated.

May God bless you all.