

United Nations Peacekeeping Operations in Timor-Leste

The United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) is the fifth UN peacekeeping operation in Timor-Leste. Established by the Security Council in resolution 1704 of 2006, UNMIT was preceded by a number of other United Nations operations or missions deployed in the country beginning in 1999.

Previous United Nations missions

- The United Nations Mission in East Timor (**UNAMET**, June - October 1999) was mandated to organize and conduct a popular consultation to ascertain whether the East Timorese people accepted a special autonomy within Indonesia or rejected the proposed special autonomy, leading to East Timor's separation from Indonesia. UNAMET was a political mission.
- The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (**UNTAET**, October 1999 - May 2002) was a peacekeeping operation. The Security Council established UNTAET following rejection by the East Timorese of special autonomy. UNTAET exercised administrative authority over East Timor during the transition to independence.
- The United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (**UNMISSET**, May 2002 - May 2005), also a peacekeeping mission, was mandated to provide assistance to the newly independent East Timor until all operational responsibilities were fully devolved to the East Timor authorities, and to permit the new nation, now called Timor-Leste, to attain self-sufficiency.
- Once the peacekeeping mission withdrew, a new political mission, the United Nations Office in Timor-Leste (**UNOTIL**, May 2005 - August 2006), supported the development of critical State institutions and the police, and provided training in observance of democratic governance and human rights.

Political, humanitarian, and security crisis

UNOTIL was scheduled to end its mandate in May 2006, and the Security Council had already received the Secretary-General's recommendations for the post-UNOTIL period. However, a series of events culminating in a political, humanitarian and security crisis of major dimensions led the Council to prolong UNOTIL's mandate, ultimately to 20 August 2006, and to request new recommendations taking into account the need for a strengthened United Nations presence. Against this background, Timor-Leste urgently requested police and military assistance from Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Portugal. On 26 May, incoming international forces began securing key installations in the country.



Reporting to the Council in August 2006, the Secretary-General noted that the level of violence had abated significantly since its peak in late May and early June and that a new Government had been installed on the pledge to unify the nation. His view, however, was that the crisis was far from resolved, with many of the underlying factors needing attention over the longer term. Among these, identified in speeches made by the President and the Prime Minister at the time of the inauguration of the new Government, were the failure of government to engage with people, the unhealed wounds of the past and high youth unemployment. The Secretary-General noted that the resolution of the political stand-off merely created an opportunity to address the grievances that gave rise to the crisis and the longer-term issues.

In assessing the situation, the Secretary-General's report pointed to the mixed legacy of the 24 years of occupation, resulting in a gulf of understanding separating those who spent years as resistance fighters, those who lived in occupied towns and villages, and those who went into exile. Veterans and young people were also likely to be divided by a generation gap. Past intra-Timorese political conflicts had bequeathed a deeply ingrained fear of any form of political contention. Furthermore, the single party that

had dominated politics since 2001 rested its claim to be the party of government as much on its standing as the original advocate of independence as its programme for the current time. Among other factors were long-standing frictions between easterners and westerners in the armed forces and the police and in neighbourhoods of the capital city. The report also noted that the roots of the imbalance in power between the institutions of State, allowing the executive to operate with few constraints, were political, institutional, and constitutional. Poverty and its associated deprivations had contributed to the crisis.

Request for a new mission

On 11 June 2006, the President of Timor-Leste, the President of the National Parliament and the Prime Minister wrote to the Secretary-General requesting that he propose to the Security Council to establish a United Nations police force in Timor-Leste to maintain law and order until the national police could undergo reorganization and restructuring. The Secretary-General requested his Special Envoy, appointed on 25 May 2006, to lead a multidisciplinary assessment mission to Timor-Leste to identify the scope of tasks to be undertaken by a post-UNOTIL mission and to develop recommendations for a future UN presence. The mission conducted its assessment from 26 June to 9 July.

Secretary-General's recommendations

In his report to the Security Council dated 8 August 2006, the Secretary-General stated that much had been achieved since independence in major areas of institutional capacity building. Nevertheless, the United Nations and the international community had learned from lessons elsewhere, and had been starkly reminded by the Timor-Leste crisis, that nation-building and peace-building were long-term tasks. This was especially true of the time required to build a new police service and justice system.

The Secretary-General went on to note that successes achieved through the work of successive peacekeeping missions would be undermined if a failure of socio-economic development left the people of Timor-Leste in poverty and unemployment. Long-term development efforts to translate available budgetary resources into programmes addressing rural poverty and urban unemployment were as crucial as anything that could be done through a new United Nations mission.

He stressed that an enhanced international role in the security sector and elsewhere must fully respect the national sovereignty of Timor-Leste, and the process of nation-building must be Timorese-owned and led. At the same time, the international community should be able to expect that the country's political leadership, having reflected on the crisis, would work together to broaden the country's political functioning into an open, pluralistic democracy in which all Timorese felt that they have a stake.

The Secretary-General recommended the establishment of a United Nations multidimensional, integrated mission, with the mandate to support the Government of Timor-Leste and to assist it in its efforts to bring about a process of national reconciliation; to support the country in all aspects of the 2007 presidential and parliamentary electoral process; to ensure, through the presence of United Nations police with an executive policing mandate, the restoration and maintenance of public security; to assist in liaising with the Indonesian military through the impartial presence of United Nations Military Liaison Officers; and to assist in further strengthening the national capacity for the monitoring, promotion and protection of human rights.

The mandate would also include provisions to assist the Prosecutor-General in resuming the investigative functions of the former Serious Crimes Unit; mainstream gender perspectives and those of children and youth; and ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations and associated personnel. The Secretary-General recommends that the mission be established for an initial period of 12 months, until after the implementation of the 2007 election results.

Concluding his report, the Secretary-General said that the new Government, and the one to follow elections in 2007, faced a difficult challenge if they were to establish the full trust of the Timorese people in their politicians and confidence in the ability of the State to uphold the rule of law. The Timorese

leaders and people should know that the United Nations would be ready to offer its good offices, as well as the support of a new and sustained mission in Timor-Leste, alongside the United Nations country team, as a candid and self-critical friend and partner in helping them to do so.

Establishment of UNMIT

Welcoming the report of the Secretary-General and, among other things expressing its appreciation and support for the deployment of the international security forces, the Security Council, by its resolution 1704 (2006) of 25 August 2006, decided to establish the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) for an initial period of six months, with the intention to renew for further periods. The Council also decided that UNMIT would consist of an appropriate civilian component, including up to 1,608 police personnel, and an initial component of up to 34 military liaison and staff officers. The Council requested the Secretary-General to review the arrangements to be established between UNMIT and the international security forces and affirmed that it would consider possible adjustments in the mission structure taking into account the views of the Secretary-General.

The Security Council mandate instructs UNMIT:

- To support the Government and relevant institutions, with a view to consolidating stability, enhancing a culture of democratic governance, and facilitating political dialogue among Timorese stakeholders, in their efforts to bring about a process of national reconciliation and to foster social cohesion;
- To support Timor-Leste in all aspects of the 2007 presidential and parliamentary electoral process, including through technical and logistical support, electoral policy advice and verification or other means;
- To ensure, through the presence of United Nations police, the restoration and maintenance of public security in Timor-Leste through the provision of support to the Timorese national police (PNTL), as outlined in the Secretary-General's report, which includes interim law enforcement and public security until PNTL is reconstituted, and to assist with the further training, institutional development and strengthening of the PNTL as well as the Ministry of Interior, and also assist in the planning and preparing of electoral-related security arrangements to adequately prepare the national police for performing their roles and responsibilities during the conduct of the 2007 elections;
- To support the Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, to liaise on security tasks and to establish a continuous presence in three border districts alongside armed United Nations police officers assigned to district police stations, through the impartial presence of United Nations military liaison officers;
- To assist the Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste in conducting a comprehensive review of the future role and needs of the security sector, including the Falintil-Forças Armadas de Defesa Timor-Leste, the Ministry of Defence, the PNTL and the Ministry of Interior with a view to supporting the Government, through the provision of advisers and in cooperation and coordination with other partners, in strengthening institutional capacity-building, as appropriate;
- To assist, in cooperation and coordination with other partners, in further building the capacity of State and Government institutions in areas where specialized expertise is required, such as in the justice sector, and to promote a "compact" between Timor-Leste and the international community for coordinating Government, United Nations and other multilateral and bilateral contributors to priority programmes;
- To assist in further strengthening the national institutional and societal capacity and mechanisms for the monitoring, promoting and protecting of human rights and for promoting justice and reconciliation, including for women and children, and to observe and report on the human rights situation;

- To facilitate the provision of relief and recovery assistance and access to the Timorese people in need, with a particular focus on the segment of society in the most vulnerable situation, including internally displaced and women and children;
- To assist in the implementation of relevant recommendations in the Secretary-General's report on Justice and Reconciliation, including to assist the Office of the Prosecutor-General of Timor-Leste, through the provision of a team of experienced investigative personnel, to resume investigative functions of the former Serious Crimes Unit, with a view to completing investigations into outstanding cases of serious human rights violations committed in the country in 1999;
- To cooperate and coordinate with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes as well as all relevant partners, including the international financial institutions and donors, in carrying out tasks mentioned above as relevant, with a view to making maximum use of existing and forthcoming bilateral and multilateral assistance to Timor-Leste in post-conflict peacebuilding and capacity-building, and to support the Government and relevant institutions, in cooperation and coordination with other partners, in designing poverty reduction and economic growth policies and strategies to achieve the development plan of Timor-Leste;
- To mainstream gender perspectives and those of children and youth throughout the Mission's policies, programmes and activities, and, working together with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, support the development of a national strategy to promote gender equality and empowerment of women;
- To provide objective and accurate information to the Timorese people, particularly regarding the forthcoming 2007 elections, while promoting an understanding of the work of UNMIT, and to assist in building local media capacity;
- To ensure, within its capability and areas of deployment, and in coordination with the international security forces, the security and freedom of movement of United Nations and associated personnel, and protect United Nations personnel, facilities, installations and equipment and humanitarian assets associated with the operation.

Renewal of UNMIT's mandate

On 25 February 2008, the Security Council, by its resolution 1802 (2008) extended the mandate of UNMIT for one year, until 26 February 2009. This resolution was adopted in the wake of the 11 February attacks on Timor-Leste President José Ramos-Horta (who was seriously injured) and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão (who escaped uninjured). The violent events shook the country and shocked the international community.

At the consultations of the Security Council on 11 February, the Council, in its Presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/5), condemned "in the strongest possible terms" those acts as an attack "on the legitimate institutions of Timor-Leste." The Council called on the Government to bring to justice those responsible for the attacks and appealed to the people of Timor-Leste to remain calm, exercise restraint, and maintain stability in the country. The Council reaffirmed its full support to the Government and people of Timor-Leste in their continued efforts to strengthen democracy and ensure public security and maintain stability in the country, as well as for the work of UNMIT and for the continued deployment of the international security force in response to the requests of the Government of Timor-Leste.

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