



**REPÚBLICA DEMOCRÁTICA DE TIMOR-LESTE
GABINETE DO PRIMEIRO-MINISTRO**

27 October 2006

For immediate release

Statement issued by Prime Minister Dr José Ramos-Horta

“Achieving lasting peace and security for us Timorese is the only thing that matters to us all – the President, the National Parliament, the Government and our people. It is something that unfortunately has consumed all of us in recent months.

Our search for the optimal solution goes on tirelessly each day.

It was with this in mind that the National Parliament of Timor-Leste yesterday debated, and adopted a resolution “About the System of Security in Timor-Leste”. I welcome this contribution of that august body.

The Parliament expressed its preference for a UN peace keeping force which had been the position of the Government. However it is also prepared to consider military arrangements under bilateral and trilateral agreements.

My Government’s decision to request Australia and New Zealand to maintain their contingents in Timor-Leste as green helmets, is based on the realities of the arrangement having worked to date, and the additional troops available for deployment, and the fact that the Government is negotiating a trilateral arrangement with the UN and Australia, that will include all the necessary details of engagement to clarify the role, the expectations and the responsibilities. This would affect the unified and coordinated command that the National Parliament appears to be seeking.

I communicated this decision to the UN in a letter dated last October 18, to the Secretary General Kofi Annan.

The decision evolved after consultations with President Xanana Gusmão, the President of the Parliament Lu-Olo, my Cabinet, other political actors including Dr Mari Alkatiri, the Secretary-General of the majority party Fretilin, and the Supreme Council for Defence and Security.

We took that decision because we believed it is in the best interests of our Nation to maintain the status quo, as both forces have been here for a period of time and are now familiar with Timor-Leste and its people.

The Resolution voted for by the National Parliament believes that security would be better if the troops were under a unified command.

It is a fact that the arrangements we proposed to UN Secretary General provide us with more troops than would be available under a peace-keeping mission. Under the UN military proposal we would only have about 350 troops, half of which would correctly be assigned to protect the UN staff and assets. The other half, 170 or so, would be deployed to secure the rest of the country as opposed to 1000 Australian and 110 New Zealand troops already here. This number will remain until at least December, and beyond if we require them. The minimum number we will have is a battalion strength of approximately 650.

Having had discussions with the acting SRSG, Finn Riese-Nielsen, acting UNPOL Commissioner Antero Lopes and the command of the international forces – Brig Gen Slater and Brig Rerden, I am absolutely confident that they can and will work in total coordination. I hope this allays any concerns the National Parliament may have when it passed the resolution.

We were also mindful that the United Nations is very stretched in these current times. When we have regional neighbours who, with the imprimatur of the Security Council, are able to provide the security we require to assist us in our efforts in nation building, it is both logical and necessary to accept our neighbours' generosity. We are also in discussion with some other countries who have indicated their willingness to also deploy some troops to serve in Timor-Leste." – **ends.**

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