

Statement by Mr. Masood Khalid, Acting Permanent Representative in the public meeting in the Security Council on Timor Leste, (20 February, 2004)

Mr. President,

I wish to thank Mr. Guehenno for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in Timor Leste and updating us on the progress made by the United Nations Mission of Support to East Timor (UNMISSET). We would also like to welcome the presence of His Excellency Foreign Minister Ramos-Horta.

2. UNMISSET's mandate is due to expire in three months time and as the Secretary-General's report states "formidable challenges" still remain as this mandate draws to a close. While we understand that Timor Leste will continue to receive assistance and support from a variety of international sources, we believe there will be a need for a continued UN presence in Timor Leste beyond May 2004.

3. Pakistan, as an Asian country, has strong affiliations with the region. As a troop contributor of both UNTAET and UNMISSET, we regard ourselves as a stakeholder in the peace and stability of Timor Leste. Our approach to the future of the UN presence in Timor Leste is guided by the following principles:

First, No peacekeeping operation must be terminated or withdrawn without completing the task assigned to it. As the distinguished Algerian Ambassador said, the UN must not prematurely disengage itself from Timor-Leste.

Second, while the national security – both internal and external - is the responsibility of every sovereign state, in post-conflict situations, such as Timor Leste, there is still a need for a continuing – even if symbolic – UN presence to provide a sense of security to the people of Timor Leste and a deterrence against those who wish to undermine country's peace and stability.

Third, We welcome the improvement of relations between Indonesia and Timor Leste – a pre-requisite for the success of political process in the region. The confidence-building task begun by UNMISSET still need to be consolidated.

Fourth, the safety and security of peacekeepers – including unarmed military and civilian personnel - is paramount in any peacekeeping operation. This is our experience in UN peacekeeping missions that formed military units are best equipped to carry out this task.

Fifth, the neutrality and impartiality of UN personnel is paramount and must not be compromised in any form. At no point can UN peacekeepers, for any reason, be placed – even indirectly – at the disposal of a sovereign government.

4. Based on the above principles, Pakistan would support the extension of UNMISET – with a reduced size and a modified mandate as proposed in the Secretary-General’s report. We would also support the continuation of a UN military presence as a token of our collective commitment to peace and stability in Timor Leste, for its deterrent value against any threat; as well as for the protection of remaining UNMISET personnel. Pakistan looks forward to working with other Council members to reach an early agreement on UNMISET’s future composition and mandate.

I thank you, Mr. President.