Press Release

ANU Workshop on Managing Transition in East Timor

A Workshop on "Managing Transition in East Timor" was held at the Australian National University from 27-29 April. The Workshop brought together some forty participants comprising mainly East Timorese participating in their personal capacities in order to exchange ideas.

The Workshop reviewed the situation in East Timor and in Indonesia and discussed forthcoming events such as the Indonesian elections and the popular consultation to be held in East Timor. No negotiations were conducted but individuals expressed their views on the various subjects under discussion. It was not the objective of the Workshop to reach agreed conclusions.

The Workshop had the benefit of a number of speakers who provided participants with ideas and case studies. Participants were grateful to the United Nations for sending representatives to advise on developments at the Tri-Partite talks in New York. Participants identified a number of issues in relation to the foreshadowed 8 August popular consultation in East Timor on which further information is required.

Among the specific topics on which papers were presented and discussion was held at the workshop were the issues of disarmament, reconciliation, democratic governance, economic viability and international economic co-operation. The Workshop also studied various situations in which the United Nations has been active so as to draw relevant experience for East Timor.

Participants agreed that the Workshop process is useful and that another Workshop should be held at a suitable time. The American University of Washington DC offered to act as host. The initiators of this process are members of the East Timor Study Group, a small group of East Timorese academics working together with the objective of providing a space for discussion and analysis of the problems faced by East Timorese society.

Participants expressed their thanks to the Australian National University for hosting the Workshop and in particular thanked the convenors, the Centre for Democratic Institutions, the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies and the Faculty of Asian Studies. Participants also thanked the Ford Foundation for its support.

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