

## **Timor-Leste elections 2007 – news media observation mission**

### **Background**

Timor-Leste is scheduled to hold both Presidential and Parliamentary elections during 2007. The Parliamentary elections will be the first conducted since Timor-Leste achieved independence in 2002, the current Parliament having been elected as a Constituent Assembly in elections organised under UN sovereignty in 2001. Presidential elections are scheduled to take place on 9 April 2007, with a second round to be held on 9 May if no candidate wins an outright majority in the first round. Dates for the parliamentary elections are yet to be announced, but are likely to be in late June or early July 2007.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste has invited New Zealand to send international election observers to observe the democratic election in Timor-Leste. The New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), in collaboration with the New Zealand Electoral Commission (NZEC), have opted to field a specialist media observation mission.

The internal security situation remains problematic, with an upsurge in violence since May 2006. This comprises gang warfare (generally rock fights, but also more serious violence at times), violent street crime, and robust political demonstration and counter demonstration (including violent fringes on occasion). MFAT's current travel advisory status for Timor-Leste is "Extreme Risk".

Fuller briefings on Timor-Leste and the political, media and security situations, as well as on election standards and observation will be provided to mission participants.

### **Mission purpose and objectives**

The purpose of the media observation mission is to promote free, fair and credible elections in Timor-Leste, as part of a wider international observer presence.

Objectives:

- A visible observer presence that may help promote a suitable environment in which the Timor-Leste news media can work in the lead-up to the elections
- An impartial and professional assessment of the Timor-Leste news media's contribution to free and fair elections
- Recommendations for the development of the Timor-Leste news media and its operating environment.

## **Mission overview**

The mission will be made up of about five senior representatives of the New Zealand news media, as well as a secretary, and will take place in two in-country stages. Stage One will take place over a five-day period before the presidential run-off polling day (May 9) and Stage Two over a similar period finishing 5-7 days before the parliamentary elections:

- Stage One - a small (2-3 people + secretary) team will undertake a technical/exploratory study scoping issues such as the law, training, organisational/ownership issues, distribution/coverage, media preparations etc, and including interviews of media, parties and candidates. Tentative dates 28/4 – 4/5/07 (to be confirmed).
- Stage Two: a larger team (5 people + secretary, including Stage One participants) will undertake on-the-ground observation of news media practice, environment and performance in the election context. Dates to be confirmed.

## **Tasks and Outputs**

- Participate in the development of a code of conduct for the mission.
- Attend a pre-departure briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade;
- Attend a briefing on arrival at the New Zealand Embassy in Dili;
- Attend election briefings in Dili as required;
- Observe and report on the role, capacity, working environment and conditions, and operations of the Timor-Leste news media in the lead-up to the elections, and the extent to which these were likely to have a) contributed to free, fair and credible elections and b) facilitated the informed participation in the elections of women, youth, the poor, and other marginalised groups.
- Stage One team: provide a brief (no more than 10 pages) independent report of findings to NZAID and to members of the Stage Two team, within one week of returning to New Zealand;
- Stage Two team: provide an independent report (approximately 10-20 pages) to the Government of Timor-Leste, the New Zealand Government, Timor-Leste news media, and international election observers commenting on the extent to which the Timor-Leste media was observed to contribute to free and fair elections and to the informed participation of marginalised groups, before departure from Dili;
- Stage Two team: provide a separate report to NZAID (no more than 20 pages) with constructive observations/recommendations for the development of the Timor-Leste news media and its operating environment, within two weeks of returning to New Zealand;
- Supply an invoice (in relation to any refundable expenses not paid for directly by MFAT/NZAID) with supporting documentation to NZAID within one month of returning to New Zealand.

## **Membership and status**

The Electoral Commission will assemble the mission membership in consultation with peak news media industry bodies. The intention is for the team to comprise senior journalists, regulators, educators and academics media professionals held in wide and high regard, and to achieve a mix of background, gender and ethnicity.

While members will be attending as New Zealand nominated observers, the mission will be independent of the New Zealand Government, any State agency, or nominating body in its deliberations.

Because the team has been selected by the New Zealand Government to represent New Zealand, and given uncertain security conditions in Timor-Leste, team members will:

- be responsible to the New Zealand Government and should conduct themselves accordingly;
- be responsible to the New Zealand Ambassador in Dili while in Timor-Leste;
- observe any instructions that may be conveyed to them by the New Zealand Government, including through the New Zealand Embassy in Dili
- observe any instructions that may be conveyed to them by international security forces in Timor-Leste.

Mission members will have no special diplomatic status, and will be subject to Timor-Leste law.

## **Conduct**

The observation team will work with the Electoral Commission to develop a code of conduct. It is expected that this will include, as a minimum, the Code of Conduct developed by the Timor-Leste Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE) as a supplement to the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers (UN 2005). Team members will be expected to sign and abide by this code of conduct at all times.

Team members will be expected to work closely, and in a participatory manner, with Timorese and other international counterparts.

## **Administration**

NZAID will cover airfares and travel costs (e.g. airport taxes, taxis, vehicle hire), accommodation, pre-departure medical costs (including vaccinations and malaria prophylactics) and insurance, and will provide a daily allowance to cover meals and incidentals. It is expected that most members will take part in the mission as part of their ongoing employment, and no fees will be offered for participation in the mission. However, where a mission member is not receiving a salary, a small honorarium may be made available at NZAID's discretion.

The Electoral Commission will provide a secretary to the Mission. The secretary will co-ordinate the New Zealand end of the mission, including its assembly and international travel arrangements, and liaise with the in-country resources.

Logistical support in-country will be organised by the NZ Embassy Dili. These will include accommodation (sleeping and working), transport, interpreting/translation, security liaison, general "fixing".

The International Centre for Journalists (a media development INGO with a current mission in Dili) will be a key contact and resource to the mission.

The mission will also liaise with and use the services of the UN election observers co-ordination office.

The visit to Timor-Leste is not without risk, and security and health conditions cannot be guaranteed. There are also risks associated with limited medical facilities. While insurance will be provided, members will travel to Timor-Leste at their own risk. The mission may be cancelled or curtailed for security reasons, at the discretion of the Ambassador.

## Team Members

**Dr Judy McGregor (Mission Leader)** is a New Zealand Human Rights Commissioner with responsibility for equal employment opportunities. Judy has had a long career in journalism, including as the first woman editor of a major Australasian newspaper and as a Professor of Communication and Journalism. She has written or edited five journalism textbooks, numerous articles, and is an authority on women's media issues. She currently combines human rights work with media education domestically and internationally, and is an advisor trustee to a trust working to improve reportage of Māori in New Zealand. She was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM) for services to journalism.

**Mr Clive Lind** is editorial development manager for Fairfax New Zealand, the country's largest media company. Clive is responsible for editorial training, among other things, in the company's newspapers, magazines and website. He has been a journalist all his working life and editor of three daily newspapers. He is a member of the New Zealand Press Council and of the Media Freedom Committee of the New Zealand Section of the Commonwealth Press Union.

**Ms Shona Geary** specialises in communications, journalism, media training, broadcasting policy and production, and facilitation. She worked as a journalist for many years, mainly with Radio New Zealand where overseas assignments included the 2000 Fiji coup and the aftermath of the 9/11 2001 attacks in New York. Shona was Head of Journalism at the New Zealand Broadcasting School during the 1990s. She has organised and carried out short news training courses in the Pacific region. Shona has Māori tribal affiliations to the Taranaki iwi.

**Ms Tapu Misa** is a freelance journalist, and currently serving her third term on the Broadcasting Standards Authority. She is a columnist for the New Zealand Herald, with a particular interest in Pacific issues. Tapu's journalism career has included stints with the Herald, More Magazine, North & South and Mana Māori Media. Samoan-born, Tapu has also served on a number of charitable trusts focussing particularly on educational achievement, the media portrayal of Māori and Pacific peoples, and media training.

**Mr Peter Northcote (Mission Secretary)** is the Communications Manager for the New Zealand Electoral Commission. His responsibilities include public information campaigns, journalism education, producing research, resources and advocacy for citizenship education, and corporate communications for the commission where he also helps out with general management and policy development. Peter's career, which began in journalism, has included senior private and public sector positions in public relations and advertising.

*The mission will be joined on its second visit by:*

**Dr David Robie** is Head of the Pacific Media Centre, based at the Auckland University of Technology where he is also an Associate Professor in the School of Communications Studies. He reported on the Asia-Pacific region for more than two decades. He has written eight books on the region's politics and media, and is managing editor of *Pacific Journalism Review*. He recently conducted a workshop on freedom of information and political reporting in Vanuatu. He won the Pacific Islands Media Association's 2005 Pacific Media Freedom award.

**Mr Walter Zweifel** has been News Editor at Radio New Zealand International since 1993. He is responsible for a Wellington staff of six and a dozen contributors in other countries who produce bulletins for both RNZI and rebroadcast in most South Pacific countries. He has been covering news and current affairs in the Asia-Pacific region for 15 years, trained Pacific journalists, and worked for a news agency in Vanuatu. Swiss-born, Walter is fluent in five European languages and has some ability in four others, including Portuguese.