

THE CONSTITUTION

- On **30 August 2001** more than **91 per cent of East Timor's eligible voters** cast ballots to elect a **Constituent Assembly**. Nearly seven months later, on **22 March 2002**, the Assembly completed its primary task – **promulgation of the soon-to-be-independent nation's Constitution**.
- **UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan** congratulated the East Timorese people after the election, stating: "I commend the spirit of peace, maturity and tolerance shown by each and every one of you and by all political parties – both throughout the campaign period and at the polls. **It provides a glowing example to the world community.**"
- **UN Transitional Administrator Sergio Vieira de Mello** remarked at the signing ceremony of the Constitution on 22 March 2002: "I would like to publicly pay my most sincere homage to the members of this Assembly for their excellent work. The people of East Timor and the international community recognize and commend the personal dedication that you have given to this task. Congratulations!"
- The Constitution calls for the Assembly to **transform itself into East Timor's first Parliament upon independence**. This was first proposed in late 2000 by the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT), an umbrella organization of political parties and civil organizations formed in 1998. SRSG Sergio Vieira de Mello has supported the transformation, and UNTAET's Independent Electoral Commission stated previously that legislative elections would have been impossible to organise ahead of independence.
- The Assembly is composed of **88 members**: 13 representing East Timor's 13 districts; the remaining 75 allocated to parties based on a nationwide proportional representation system. Twelve political parties currently hold seats in the legislature.
- The Assembly voted on 25 March 2002 to **extend its legislative powers** to cover the two months remaining before independence. At the request of Vieira de Mello, the Assembly will create the Parliament's internal rules and committee structures; debate six high-priority pieces of legislation, including a labour code, a telecommunications bill, a public broadcasting bill and a national budget proposal; and consider what international conventions and treaties should be ratified during the Independence Celebrations.
- The Constitution was drafted with the direct input of the people of East Timor. More than **38,000 people** turned out in June and July 2001 at **212 Constitutional public hearings** that solicited the views of the population on what should be considered by the Assembly during the drafting process. Copies of the final draft of the Constitution were sent around the territory in early March 2002 for a second round of consultations that resulted in several last-minute revisions.

