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**Re: Lombok Treaty
PUBLIC HEARING**
Monday, 26 February 2007

Reply to Questions on Notice by Mr Wilkie

For the Secretary,

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON TREATIES
COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENT**

Questions:

Mr WILKIE—Thank you, Mr Chairman. I have two questions which I would like you to take on notice so you could respond afterwards. Firstly, regarding the discussion we have already had, I would be very interested in your opinion whether the human rights situation in West Papua is improving or becoming worse and has the transition to a democratic federal government improved that situation? Secondly, President Yudhoyono, as you were saying, is committed to the implementation of the special autonomy law for West Papua. Can you tell us what affect this will have on the human rights situation and the military's activities in West Papua? I would appreciate your views on that. Specifically in relation to this treaty, I have read one of the submissions from Dr Benny Giay which says:

Based on these concerns, I ask Australians not to support this treaty because the treaty will only cause more death and tragedy on the part of West Papuan civilians in the future.

Why will this treaty cause that to occur in West Papua?

Reply to Mr Wilkie:

Let me take the two parts of your first question in reverse order and answer your second question at the same time.

Papua has been experiencing a highly qualified autonomy within a partially decentralised but by no means federal system since its special autonomy (*otonomi khusus* or *otsus*) was legislated in 2001. The potential benefits of *otsus* arise from two potentially important reforms:

- there is now a preponderance of indigenous Papuans among newly elected officials-- province governors and regency heads (*bupati*)
- vast new revenues are flowing to Papua, thanks to the policy of returning most of the taxes levied by Jakarta on its natural resource revenues (80 per cent for timber and mining) to Papua.

However the newly elected Papuan officials remain powerless to control the military and police authorities who have stepped up their repressive, so-called “security approach” to Papuan aspirations for self-determination since the year 2000. And the new provincial revenues have completely failed to make any serious impact on West Papua’s long-standing health and educational problems. (Thirty per cent of Papua’s oil and gas revenue was supposed to be earmarked for these purposes but the spending simply hasn’t happened.)

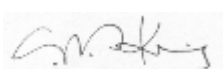
Corruption at the periphery and the centre (Jakarta) –and illegal military demands on regency funds in Papua--have seen these trillions of rupiah in new revenue largely wasted. On top of that, fears of West Papuan “separatism” in Jakarta have escalated, including fears by the military that they would “lose” the last province in which they can earn huge revenues from legal and illegal business dealings, leading to more suffering and deprivation in Papua.

Dr Benny Giay’s statement sums up the Papuan perspective which sees international—and especially Australian--intervention in Papua as essential to a solution which takes account of Papuan historical grievances as well as the present situation. The Lombok Treaty in this perspective sends the wrong signal to the Indonesian government and the Australian people. Papua’s grievances have never been properly addressed in Jakarta, and Papuans understandably perceive themselves as victims of a kind of quiet genocide by poverty, neglect, economic marginalisation, military repression and demographic inundation (an uncontrolled influx of new settlers from the rest of Indonesia). Having been betrayed by the US, Australia and other Western powers in the early 1960s they look to Australia and the broad international community to come forward as circuit breakers of their final suppression now.

In summary, special autonomy has done nothing of substance to ameliorate the plight of the Papuans since 1963, and the provisions of the special autonomy law have been repeatedly flouted by its architects in Jakarta, above all by the retired military officers who dominate the Ministry of Internal Affairs. With Presidential connivance they have been able to play a divide and rule game against the Papuans by moving to set up several new provinces in Papua in defiance of Papuan opinion and the special all-Papuan upper house, the MRP (*Majelis Rakyat Papua*), which should have been consulted under the provisions of the special autonomy law but was not. The main significance of these new provinces—the first of which was recently renamed West Papua for maximum confusion--will be the opportunities they give Jakarta to proliferate an already discredited government bureaucracy in Papua and to set up new military commands there.

With best wishes

I am yours sincerely



Peter King
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