

Mr. Speaker, one aspect of livable communities is the global connections that we are facing today as trade interrelates our economies, world peace is affected as one destabilized area can have serious consequences for others, how environmental exploitation has global consequences for us all as we have increasingly destructive capacity in an increasingly smaller world.

There is need for people who care about livable communities to focus on Indonesia, focus across four time zones, over 15,000 islands, and a population of over 210 million people. It is a spectacular, diverse, and extremely vulnerable region. It is one in political transition, moving from three political parties and really no Democratic election in the last 40 years, to approaching over 150 and its first election in two generations this June.

We have seen in East Timor, home of tragic violence, as it was invaded by the Indonesian military 25 years ago, we have seen the death of over 200,000 people in an island that still has only perhaps a population of 800,000 and a situation that cries for a peaceful resolution.

Indonesia is a nation of great financial turmoil today. Less than 2 years ago, it was one of those successful Asian financial tigers, so successful that we were on the verge of withdrawing our aid programs. Today, it is now an economic basket case, with half its population at or below the Indonesian poverty level and virtually not a single solvent financial institution in the entire country.

We have seen long simmering racial, ethnic and religious tensions bubble to the surface, aggravated by the serious economic difficulties that have led to the death of hundreds of its citizens. Indonesia was the backdrop for the movie 'The Year Of Living Dangerously' a third of a century ago when Sukarno lost power to Suharto.

Today, in the post-Suharto era, Indonesia is still living dangerously. We have serious potential for violence even as the ray of hope dawns on East Timor and the government is talking about a potential for independence. Yet at the same time there is pervasive evidence that the military has provided weapons to paramilitary agents on the island, and there could be the potential for bloodshed upon their withdrawal.

There continues to be the potential for violence in Indonesia's urban centers, and there is definitely violence that is being visited upon its ecology as the nation struggles to get economic gain at the expense of its forests, fishing stock, coral reefs and endangered species.

I sincerely hope that my colleagues will put Indonesia on the radar screen. It will be on the radar screen for the administration and for the American public. It is time for the United States to take a strong and aggressive action to help resolve the situation in East Timor so that the potential news of the military withdrawal is not an open invitation for greater bloodshed against the Timorese.

It is important that our Secretary of State, who is due to visit Indonesia after a China visit later this month, is prepared to put the full force of American attention into this area. It is important that we be thoughtful in terms of our economic assistance so the world environment does not suffer as a result of this economic collapse.

We need to press for as much support, monitoring, and observation as possible for these critical elections taking place in June spread across over 100,000 polling places in a country that has no election infrastructure.

It may be a little effort, a little time, it may be a little trouble for the United States to be involved in Indonesia during these troubled times, but I can think of no place in the world where our investment would have more impact on the global economy and on the lives of ordinary men and women.