



**REPÚBLICA DEMOCRÁTICA DE TIMOR-LESTE**  
**SECRETARIA DE ESTADO PARA A PROMOÇÃO DA IGUALDADE**

**Timor-Leste and Development Partners Meeting 2010**

**07 April 2010, Mercado Municipal Conference Center, Dili, Timor-Leste**

**“Goodbye Conflict, Welcome Development”**

**Written Statement: Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI)**

The Government of Timor-Leste is committed to advancing equality between women and men in all spheres of life. Gender equality is guaranteed in our Constitution as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) which Timor-Leste ratified in 2002. This guarantee has been elaborated upon in the Dili Agreement and the Plan of Action of the Third Women’s Congress. Reflecting on the theme of this meeting, the effects of armed conflict on women are of particular concern, as direct targets, refugees and internally displaced persons, and the special needs of women and girls during reintegration and reconstruction need to be taken into account due to consequent impacts on durable peace and reconciliation as articulated in Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 on Women Peace and Security.

In post-conflict reconstruction and development, Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI) has made significant efforts strengthen women’s rights and gender equality. Key achievements in 2009 to highlight:

**Gender Mainstreaming.** SEPI worked in close coordination with Gender Focal Points (GFPs) to ensure that gender was mainstreamed in government policies, planning and legislation. Targets and indicators were engendered in the 2010 National Priorities, and in the Census and Demographic Health Surveys; strategies, policies and assessments on gender in the priority sectors of Education, Health, Agriculture and Justice were developed; the Government Annual Action Plan template incorporated a gender element and key planners, budget officers and policy makers were trained in its aims; Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) training continued; SEPI’s Strategic Plan 2010-2015, Draft Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines, and Draft SEPI Capacity Needs Assessment were developed. These activities, contributed towards the ultimate aim of gender mainstreaming and the recognition of gender as a determining factor influencing the overall success of development programmes. They seek better resource allocation, effective and more equitable service delivery for women.

**National legislation to promote women's rights.** SEPI monitors the development of legislation relevant to gender equality and advocates for the passage of gender-sensitive legislation. SEPI was the lead institution in the finalisation of the Law against Domestic Violence (DV) approved by the Council of Ministers in Aug 2009 and approved by Parliament in general terms Mar 2010. The law provides for legal protection, legal remedies and the establishment of shelters and support services for survivors of DV. SEPI also successfully advocated for a provision that DV is a public crime in the new Penal Code that was adopted Mar 2009. SEPI also successfully lobbied for equal rights of women and men in all aspects of matrimonial regime and inheritance rights in the draft Civil Code, and equality of use, ownership and transfer rights of property for women in the draft Land Law. In the area of human trafficking SEPI actively participated in the development of a draft National Plan of Action, and will participate in a working group to draft an Anti-Trafficking Law.

**First reporting on CEDAW.** SEPI led the state delegation in its first constructive dialogue with the CEDAW Committee on 30 July 2009 to present its Initial State Report. Following this SEPI carried out post-CEDAW reporting activities, disseminating the CEDAW Concluding Comments to Council of Ministers, GFPs, civil society and district administrators. The CEDAW Working Group continues to exist to monitor the implementation of the convention, and to generate the next report due on Education and Health in May 2011. The next full periodic report is due in 2012.

**Implementing SCR 1325.** Together with the Conflict Prevention and Recovery Unit of Irish Aid, SEPI organised a Trilateral cross-learning event on SCR 1325 between Ireland, Liberia and Timor-Leste in Dec 2009. The first cross-learning in Ireland, Jun 2009 focused on women's participation while the second cross-learning in Dili focussed on protection and prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). Discussions centered on Justice, Security and Health based on the needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations. The third cross-learning will take place 12-16 April 2010 in Liberia, to which SEPI will join an inter-ministerial delegation.

**Significant progress was made but critical challenges remain.** As highlighted in the CEDAW Concluding Observations, Timor-Leste has yet to achieve gender equality and continues to face a number of challenges that must be overcome. Among these challenges is a patriarchal ideology, the prevalence of violence against women, low enrolment and completion rates of secondary and higher education of girls, high maternal mortality and fertility rates, low legal literacy among women, a high number of women in informal and insecure employment, and the under-representation of women in decision-making positions in government and the private sector.

**Plans for future and challenges.** As gender is a cross-cutting issue, gender mainstreaming is dependent on institutional will, allocation of financial and human resources, and capacity. Capacity-building in gender analysis, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of GFPs, both national and district, along with SEPI staff will be an ongoing priority. To further strengthen the GFP system, SEPI is developing a proposed resolution to improve the GFP mechanism. Scholarships for gender studies would greatly assist this process of capacity building.



Training is also needed for the women's groups that SEPI supports through its Public Transfers programme. These cover all areas of small business development including management, accounting, marketing, product identification and diversification.

To ensure a comprehensive and coherent approach is taken to advancing gender equality in Timor-Leste, a National Policy for Gender Equality is needed that integrates the needs of women in Timor-Leste, international standards and best practices. A Communication Strategy is also planned in order to articulate SEPI's advocacy strategy to raise gender awareness among stakeholders and the public.

Further lobbying for the generation of sex-disaggregated data in national surveys and administrative data collection will be undertaken for stronger evidence-based gender analysis and research. Sex-disaggregated data is fundamental to evaluating the accomplishment of gender mainstreaming and GRB initiatives. Currently, SEPI is conducting research on gender, agriculture and micro-finance. Potential future research topics include investigation of: the root causes of maternal mortality, vocational training areas for women, adverse cultural practices and stereotypes, and causes of girls' drop-out, particularly at the higher levels of education.

**Conclusion.** Timor-Leste is now proudly nominating its first-ever candidate for the CEDAW Committee, Ms. Maria Helena Pires. This nomination shows that it is within the capacity of Timor-Leste's women to contribute to the promotion of equality at an international level. Ms. Pires was chosen after extensive consultations with national institutions and civil society, and has an active history of women's empowerment, governance and development.

In reference to the TLDPM theme of "Goodbye Conflict, Welcome Development", SEPI congratulates the Parliament in their debate of the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) report, and for the creation of an institution to implement the CAVR recommendations. This will be critically important to redress past human rights violations including SGBV, and recognize the critical role women played during the resistance movement. The important role women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and peace-building, and the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security are stressed in SCR 1325.

SEPI, together with the Government of Timor-Leste will continue its endeavours to ensure the implementation of CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals for the realization of SEPI's Vision: for a Timor-Leste that is a prosperous and peaceful nation with a gender-fair society where human dignity and human rights and women's rights are valued, protected, and promoted by its laws and culture.

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Thank you.

*Mrs. Idelta Maria Rodrigues*

*Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality*