



*“Adeus Conflito, Bemvindo Desenvolvimento”*

SPEECH BY THE  
MINISTER OF FINANCE

HE Emilia Pires

at the

Hand-over of the X-Ray facility at Batugade

**16 July 2010**

Your Excellency the Ambassador of Japan  
Your Excellency the Vice Minister  
Representatives of Indonesian Government  
Representatives of other Government Agencies  
Community Leaders  
Staff of Ministry of Finance  
Friends

Thank you all for coming today and being part of this unique occasion for the Timor-Leste Customs Service.

I was very surprised when I arrived here today to find this new facility had sprung up as a temporary border post - a place where Customs can continue to undertake its important role of gathering revenue and protecting the people of Timor-Leste.

It was a surprise to me to see all the work that has gone on to establish this compound. The Vice Minister has managed to keep all these changes very quiet.

### Significance of the Compound

This new compound is important for two reasons.

Firstly, it contains the new Customs x-ray facility. The mobile CAB 2000 inspection unit was developed by Smith Engineering a world leader in X-Ray technology. It is the same as the unit Customs operates at the Dili Port and as such is operationally familiar to our staff.

Having the unit here is a sure sign of the growth and development in the Timor-Leste Customs Service. The use of X-Ray technology represents best practice in the clearance of goods. It allows for speedier clearance times and reflects the professionalism and progressive nature of the

Timor-Leste Public Service.

The second important reason for today's event is to acknowledge this area as an important, be it temporary, facility for Customs operations, as the principal border crossing with our close neighbor Indonesia.

### Integrated Border Posts

I say temporary because this week the Integrated Border Post Steering Committee met for the first time to progress the construction of a new post that will be built on the site of the original border crossing just down the road from here.

When built, the new Integrated Border Post will provide a state of the art multi-agency building for the clearance of passengers and cargo at the border. It is our hope that this new facility will be completed by early 2011 and we aim to provide a very welcoming and functional building for tourists and members of the business community to utilize. I am also very pleased that the local community will be able to use this crossing point with minimum fuss through the recently introduced border pass.

I know that the Steering Committee under the watchful eye of the Vice-Minister of Finance and Director General for Revenue and Customs are working hard to ensure the Integrated Border Post will be an iconic Timorese building that we can all be proud of.

To further support Customs and the other agencies working at the land borders of Timor-Leste, the Government has budgeted to build an additional two integrated border posts this financial year. These posts will be built at Salele and Sakato. Next year, I hope to be able to fund the construction of additional posts at Tunu-Bibi, Passabe and Oe-silo.

Improvement in Timor-Leste Customs Services, to date: Towards the goal of becoming a world class supplier of customs services

Dear friends, we have heard from the Director-General for Revenue and Customs about the many positive developments within Customs. I know the Revenue and Customs Directorate are working hard, as is the rest of my Ministry, to ensure that we improve the capacity of our staff and the working environment in which they operate.

Let me stress some important initiatives underway within my Ministry:

- It is just over 12 months since we introduced the new Organic Law and Ministerial Diploma that established the Revenue and Customs Directorate.
- The filling of the new positions within Revenue and Customs was undertaken by the Civil Service Commission with support from my Ministry. Collectively, we were able to achieve a merit selection of senior staff to fill the key positions in the Directorate. A process that has now been adopted throughout the Public Service.
- In recent weeks, a second round of merit selections has been finalized and I am very pleased to advise you that a new National Director of Customs has been appointed. Her name is Brigida da Silva and I look forward to her joining the team at Revenue and Customs over the coming weeks.
- The Ministry continues to lead the way in offering scholarships for graduate, post-graduate and professional development opportunities both in Timor-Leste and overseas. We currently have 32 staff studying overseas and this number will increase in the future.
- Over the coming weeks, I will present to the Council of Ministers a special career regime for Revenue and Customs staff. This will enable those officers who have studied and obtained relevant qualifications to receive a higher salary for the work they are doing.

It can be said that Customs is making significant advances towards its goal of becoming a world class supplier of customs services. We embarked on an ambitious reform and modernization program involving restructuring its operations and management, in line with best practice guides set out by the World Customs Organization, utilizing the latest technologies, introducing a customer friendly culture and working more closely with its stakeholders.

The results so far, are very positive, with duty collections reaching record levels even in a time when the world economy is suffering so badly.

This arm of the Ministry of Finance helps to fund the 4<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Government's ambitious and far-reaching agenda to lift prosperity and reduce poverty. The funds that the Revenue and Customs collect pays for health services, water and electricity, roads, education, social welfare, housing, rural development and many other necessities of life for the people of Timor-Leste.

That is why it is absolutely vital for Revenue & Customs to function at the highest level. Never before has so much effort been invested by Ministry of Finance in continually improving the professional skills of its staff. In the future, the effectiveness of public employees will be measured in terms of job performance and productivity. Those who produce the best results will be suitably rewarded.

Today's event highlights the special contribution of the Customs Service to the operations of Revenue & Customs. Customs is in the process of changing, improving and broadening its role. It has been performing well recently in the crucial task of collecting import tariffs and in the introduction of better technology, such as the ASYCUDA entry system. Border protection, which complements the gathering of revenue, is becoming increasingly important in an era of unprecedented transnational crime, such as smuggling, money laundering and drug trafficking.

We have heard today from the Director General for Revenue and Customs on the success of the

Dili X-Ray facility since it commenced operation in early 2009. It is a very promising start and we look forward to continuing success in the future.

Closing

I would like to thank the Government of Japan, the Japanese people and the Japan International Cooperation System (JICS) for providing the funding and technical and consultancy support to establish this X-Ray inspection facility for Customs.

The Japanese Government has been a great partner in the development of Timor-Leste and we look forward to continuing this partnership in the years to come.

Mr Ambassador, please pass on my thanks and the thanks of the people of Timor-Leste to your Minister of Finance for the supply of this unit.

It now gives me very great pleasure to declare this new facility officially open.

Thank you.

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