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FISCAL REFORM COMMISSION

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Press Release

Government commits to improve good governance and integrity in Customs through the Arusha Declaration

Dili- The Council of Ministers has taken an important step to improve good governance and integrity in Customs by adopting the Revised Arusha Declaration. The Declaration is an important part of the government's efforts to reform the country's Customs Authority through the Fiscal Reform Commission.

"Integrity is a critical issue for all Customs administrations around the world and corruption severely limits the capacity of Customs to collect revenue, protect borders and control the movement of goods," said Vice Minister of Finance Helder Lopes. "The Declaration acknowledges this and sets out a series of regulations and guidelines that help Customs prevent and combat corruption."

"The principles contained in the Declaration are for both public and private sector institutions. We hope this signals to the private sector that the Government is serious about combatting corruption. The cooperation of the private sector to support this important initiative is critical to facilitate trade," continued Vice Minister Lopes.

The Timor-Leste Customs Authority will begin to immediately implement the principles of the Arusha Declaration. "The approval of the New Customs Code and the Arusha Declaration establishes a solid foundation to raise the integrity of Customs," said Fernanda Borges, Coordinator of the Fiscal Reform Commission. "Practical steps the Fiscal Reform Commission and Customs are presently taking include drafting a new code of conduct, customs procedures, bringing in modern IT systems and making significant investments to develop human resources."

About the importance of integrity in Customs

Customs administrations around the world play a key role in trade facilitation, revenue collection, community protection and national security. As such, the lack of integrity in Customs can distort trade and investment opportunities, undermine public trust in government administration and ultimately jeopardise the well being of all citizens. Integrity is a prerequisite for the proper functioning of a Customs administration.

About the Revised Arusha Declaration

In 2003, the World Customs Organisation together with its member states discussed the key factors to prevent corruption and increase the level of integrity in Customs. The result was the Revised Arusha Declaration- the original declaration was adopted in 1993. By adopting the Revised Declaration, WCO member states commit to improve integrity through self-assessment, action planning, implementation and evaluation. Timor-Leste has been a member of the WCO since 2003.

About the Fiscal Reform Commission

The Fiscal Reform Commission is a technical body established by the Sixth Constitutional Government of Timor-Leste, Resolution no. 26/2015, and mandated with assessing all current and new forms of revenue. Raising the integrity of Customs is a key priority of the reforms of the national Customs Authority.

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