

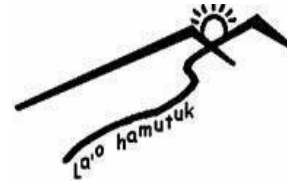
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**Statement from La'ó Hamutuk  
for the first Conference on Adaptation to Climate Change**

5 November 2014

***“Tackling climate change requires stronger political action than adaptation projects.”***

On 5-7 November 2014, the Secretary of State for Environment (SEMA), National Directorate for Environmental International Affairs and Climate Change (DNAAIAC), together with donors and international NGOs in the Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change, organized the first “Conference on Adaptation to Climate Change” in Dili. This event is an opportunity for La'ó Hamutuk to remind the Timor-Leste Government, donors, agencies, NGOs, academics and civil society that dealing with the phenomenon of climate change requires strong political actions to address the root of the problem, and to call on polluting nations and companies to change their behaviour.

According to the conclusions of the scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change is occurring because human activities generate greenhouse gas emissions. A small group of rich and industrialized countries is responsible for this pollution because: they invested highly polluting “dirty” energy (oil, carbon) sectors, their transport systems have many vehicles, their intensive agricultural practices consume a lot of energy and chemical inputs, they have very polluting industry sector and their international trade requires a lot of energy and pollutes a lot. However, the most vulnerable nations, including small Pacific islands, and poor countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, will be the most impacted by climate change.

La'ó Hamutuk, like many civil society groups in the world, defends the concept of “climate justice” which means that the nations responsible for climate change are the ones who must resolve the problems they have created. Their support for adaptation activities in vulnerable nations is not aid but their duty (they have a “historical debt”) because they are the ones responsible for climate change. In addition, they must not use their support for adaptation as a rational for not reducing their own emissions. It is not for other nations to “adapt” or to sell rights for them to continue polluting (carbon credits); a profound change is required to reduce emissions.

If we analyse climate change in more depth, we see that it is linked to a global economic system that promotes capitalism, continuous growth, overproduction, overconsumption, and overexploitation of nature.

Timor-Leste's Government should learn from this reality and adopt a genuinely sustainable development model, basing its adaptation plans on this model. This implies having a long-term vision, investing in renewable energy and energy-saving buildings, developing a public transportation system to limit private vehicles, controlling the quality of vehicles, limiting imports and promoting production and consumption of local food, creating employment opportunities in environmental protection and sustainable agriculture, and maintaining the balance between our activities and nature.

Finally, we should be cautious of well-intentioned projects which try to help, but which prevent communities from developing their own capacity to find solutions. Time at the scale of the climate and at the scale of human adaptation to climate is obviously far longer than the lifetime of a project. So it would be better to support and join the struggle of the nations victimised by climate change who ask the responsible nations to change their attitude and development models.

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