

PRESS RELEASE

GOVERNMENT OF TIMOR-LESTE, MINISTRY OF JUSTICE LAUNCH PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT LAND LAW

Dili, 12 June 2009. Today Timor-Leste's Prime Minister, Kay Rala 'Xanana' Gusmão, and the Minister of Justice, Dra. Lúcia Lobato, launched the public consultation on the Draft Law to Establish the Special Regime for Attributing Property Rights (referred to as the Land Law). The goal of today's launch is to consult the Timorese people about the Draft Land Law, and obtain public opinion before the Draft Law is sent to the Council of Ministers and the National Parliament, later this year. During the public consultation, the public and civil society will have the opportunity to comment on the Draft of this key legislation.

The Public Consultation on the Draft Land Law will take place during June, July and August, and will hear opinions and suggestions from Timorese people and civil society in each of the country's 13 districts. In addition, comments on the Draft can be submitted by email to the National Directorate for Legal Advice and Legislation (DNAJL) at the following address: dnajl@mj.gov.tl. The final date for submitting comments has been set at 31 August 2009. The Draft Law will be available from today in Portuguese and Tetum via the Ministry of Justice's website, www.mj.gov.tl. An English Draft will be available early next week on the Website or can be requested by email from the 'Ita Nia Rai' project (see below). In addition, the public consultation includes a summary document in Tetum (other languages forthcoming) that explains the concepts behind the draft law in simple terms.

The Draft Land Law sets out the proposal for establishing a special legal regime that will allow the Government to determine and award first-time property ownership rights to land in Timor-Leste.

The Draft legislation was prepared by a working group composed of lawyers and technical advisors from the National Directorate for Legal Advice and Legislation, the National Directorate for Land, Property and Cadastral Services, and the National Directorate for Registry and Notary Services. The working group took into account consultations with Timorese stakeholders, research on land issues from both Timor-Leste (UNTL) and other countries, and consulted specialists from around the world, including the Portuguese Ministry of Justice and the Australian National University.

Once approved by the public, the Council of Ministers and the National Parliament, the Land Law will be applied systematically, following a transparent process of land claims collection and public display of these claims. This system is designed to protect communities by ensuring that the process is transparent - This data collection process is currently being conducted by the DNTPSC with support from the USAID-funded 'Ita Nia Rai' program. To date, the program has already collected over 1,500 claims in 4 district capitals: Aileu, Baucau, Liquica and Manatuto.

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