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Timor-Leste passes Law establishing a Maritime Council, affirming its intent to settle Maritime Boundaries with near neighbor Australia

On January 14th, 2015, the Law on the Creation of a Council for Final Delimitation of Maritime Boundaries [CFDMB] was promulgated.

Law No 2/2015 gives expression to the October 24th, 2014 Resolution of National Parliament to support the Government in the creation of this Council.

The law prescribes the main duties of the Council and they are to define the key terms of the negotiation of a treaty to delimit final maritime boundaries with the Commonwealth of Australia, to serve in a supervisory role to ensure the quality and overall direction of the negotiation process and provide instructions and guidelines on relevant decisions and strategy.

The Council will be led by the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste and is going to include former Presidents and Prime Ministers and other eminent and qualified participants.

The law outlines the practical workings of the Council and includes sections on structure, membership, administration and funding.

Activities in the Timor Sea, which stretches between the shores of Timor-Leste and Australia, are currently guided by provisional arrangements in the form of three treaties: The Timor Sea Treaty [TST], Certain Maritime Arrangements in the Timor Sea [CMATS – which Timor-Leste has declared to be invalid due to espionage activities by Australia] and the International Unitization Agreement [IUA].

Timor-Leste and Australia, as parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea [UNCLOS], have a positive obligation to reach a final agreement on maritime delimitation of their boundaries, with the current provisional arrangements “not to hamper or jeopardize the reaching of the final agreement.”

The new Law declares that “Twelve years have passed since the restoration of the independence of the Nation, and it is now necessary to determine, once and for all, the national maritime boundaries in light of their enormous social, political and economic impact.” **ENDS**



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