



## NEWSROOM

# DLA Piper advises Timor-Leste on historic maritime treaty

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DLA Piper has been advising the Government of Timor-Leste, for more than four years, on its historic maritime treaty with the Australian Government, signed today at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, following the successful outcome of a compulsory conciliation process.

The Treaty was signed by the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister for the Delimitation of Borders and Agent in the conciliation process, H.E. Agio Pereira and Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, overseen by the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres and Commission Chair Ambassador Peter Taksøe-Jensen. This brings a dignified and mutually beneficial end to what has been a protracted difference between the neighbours going back a number of decades.

DLA Piper has worked closely with the Timorese leadership on a range of matters over the last ten years. In 2013 a small team began working with the Government on formulating a revised strategy in relation to the Timor Sea. Working with the Timor-Leste Maritime Boundary Office, DLA Piper played a central role in advising on what was a little known compulsory conciliation process – the first time this has been activated under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The Permanent Court of Arbitration administered the process and issued a [press release](#) today announcing details regarding the [maritime boundary treaty](#) between Timor-Leste and Australia. The agreed boundary is based on the median line between the two countries and will result in almost all of the previous Joint Petroleum Development Area, as well as significant additional areas, becoming the sovereign territory of Timor-Leste.

DLA Piper lead partner Stephen Webb said: "This has been a significant achievement for the Government and the people of Timor-Leste. This is a matter that, at its heart, allowed the smaller, younger nation to stand on a level playing field and realise its sovereignty with a larger neighbour.

"The conciliation process and the resulting treaty primarily delimits a permanent boundary. It also recognises and respects the rights of the many companies with an interest in this part of the Timor Sea and provides a platform for the ongoing approval process in relation to Greater Sunrise."

"A real key to success was the appointment, by both countries, of highly regarded and committed conciliators. They deserve considerable credit for the way they, and the PCA, played such a proactive role."

DLA Piper International Board Member and London-based senior partner, Janet Legrand said: "Advising Timor-Leste on this matter of national importance has always been a real privilege for our firm. It has been a truly international and collaborative effort, involving lawyers from ten DLA Piper offices in the Asia Pacific region, Europe and the US."

"While this first UNCLOS process focused on a maritime boundary, in light of this success, the model is likely to be considered for use in other areas where protracted State to State differences could benefit from an innovative structured third party assisted process."

The global DLA Piper team was led by Australian-based partner Stephen Webb, with key Sydney-based partner Gitanjali Bajaj, and colleagues Liam Prescott, Greta Bridge, Efi Goudakis and others in Australia, Sadhie Abayasekara (in Timor-Leste), Litigation & Regulatory partner, Janet Legrand in London and DLA ABBC in Lisbon. The US team was led by Mac Bernstein and included Professor Harold Koh, Senator Mitchell (having played a leading role in the Northern Ireland peace process) and others. DLA Piper instructed leading international counsel Professor Vaughan Lowe and Sir Michael Wood in London and junior counsel Eran Stoecker in New York.

DLA Piper has enjoyed a long partnership with the Government of Timor-Leste. Originally embarking on a pro bono relationship, the firm has provided more than ten lawyers on long-term secondments since 2008 to work with the Government on nation building initiatives.

The firm has been advising the Government of Timor-Leste commercially, on a number of international matters, including relating to the Timor Sea issues, since 2013.

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