

FORUM ONG TIMOR LESTE THE TIMOR LESTE NGO FORUM



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Statement by NGOs

Timor-Leste and Development Partners' Meeting

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The NGO community thanks the Ministry of Finance for this opportunity to participate, and we appreciate the support and interest from Timor-Leste's development partners. Please excuse our omission of individual remarks of respect.

This statement results from consultation with local and international NGOs, but we hope that you recognize that civil society in Timor-Leste is diverse, and just as in other countries, not everyone has the same information, analysis or perspectives. We encourage donors and government to consult widely with civil society regarding these and other issues, and not to expect that the NGO Forum or any other single contact point can represent or consult for all views. Nevertheless, we have tried to summarize some of the principal issues which many NGOs in Timor-Leste feel are most important to speak with you about. We have concentrated less on issues affecting women or youth than they deserve, knowing that the Women's Network, Rede Feto, and the Timor-Leste National Youth Council will be speaking specifically about the issues facing their constituencies.

We would like to use this opportunity to highlight some of the major challenges still facing Timor-Leste, and the responsibilities of the Government of Timor-Leste and donors to meet these challenges and advance social and economic justice for Timor-Leste's people, including achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

One of the most important of these challenges is the ongoing need to demonstrate a commitment to criminal justice, by holding perpetrators of serious crimes to account.

Another fundamental responsibility is to ensure that all Timorese citizens, including those in rural areas, can enjoy their basic human rights, such as the rights to education, food and health, and the environment is protected to safeguard the rights of future generations.

A third responsibility of government and donors is to ensure that aid is spent – and evaluated – effectively, to ensure it reaches the Timorese communities for whom it is intended.

The theme of this meeting highlights the progress that we have made since 2008. We recognize that focusing on short term National Priorities has brought fast results in some areas. **However, the development of Timor-Leste is not a short term project and we**

therefore urge government and development partners to, once again, foster a long term approach through the development of a 5 year plan this year.

We will now discuss these issues, as well as other especially significant challenges facing Timor-Leste, in more detail.

Justice and governance: towards a peaceful future

It is vital that the government and its development partners remain focused on achieving justice for the citizens of Timor-Leste, in order to ensure a peaceful future.

We welcome the commitment to access to justice as the seventh National Priority, as well as the work done to approve the draft Penal and Civil Codes, and the efforts at consultation, though as we will explain shortly, these would have benefited from further strengthening. We also welcome efforts to improve infrastructure for the courts over the past year, though the Public Defender's Office still needs further support, and there need to be more Public Defenders in the districts.

We are deeply concerned, however, that many serious problems that we raised at this same meeting a year ago are yet to be resolved, and that until these problems are resolved, it will be difficult for Timor-Leste to resolve historical problems and move forward with a strong respect for the rule of law and governance. On these issues, we call on the government to set an example.

Justice for past crimes

First and foremost, particularly as we approach the tenth anniversary of the human rights violations of 1999, we continue to call for an end to the ongoing cycle of impunity which dates back to 1975. There is a strong perception that people who commit political crimes go free even if they were recommended for prosecution by independent commissions. Most cases from 2006 still remain unresolved. The granting of parole, including to those convicted of crimes against humanity, undermines efforts at seeking justice for serious crimes. Furthermore, despite several national and international commissions since 1999, the most important of which was to create an international tribunal to try crimes against humanity committed during the Indonesian occupation, very few of their recommendations have been implemented. We therefore **call upon the government to hold a full and proper parliamentary debate of the CAVR report and take action on its recommendations. The international community must now implement the UN's repeated promises by allocating the necessary political, financial and legal resources to end impunity for these crimes against humanity.**

Transparency and accountability

We are encouraged by several of the government's initiatives promoting transparency and accountability in support of clean and effective government, in line with the sixth National Priority. These include the establishment of the Civil Service Commission; the initiation of a

legal framework to establish a High Administrative Tax and Audit Court; the plan for decentralization of government services throughout the country and the development of local governance at the municipal levels. We urge the parliament to discuss and finalise the new suco legislation in time for the scheduled elections, and strongly recommend that suco council elections candidacy is independent and not aligned to political parties.

We emphasise that Commissions cannot fill the gap without a shared commitment by government leaders, funders and civil servants to prevent corruption, and not only to punish it after it occurs.

We encourage donors to support the parliament and government in enacting a “Corruption Law” which will define corruption and create legally-binding, government-wide rules and policies to prevent it. These should establish freedom of information, transparency, accountability and checks and balances; define and prohibit conflicts of interest, soliciting, receiving or accepting bribes; require open and public tender processes; require public declaration of assets by decision-making office-holders; and protect journalists, sources and whistleblowers.

People in Timor-Leste, and particularly vulnerable groups, currently face serious barriers in seeking information about and giving input to government decisions and legal information, and therefore understanding rule of law and accessing rights and justice. For example, local civil society, including private lawyers, was not able to comment on the draft Civil Code, because it was not available in Tetum or Bahasa Indonesia. The Civil Code will regulate such crucial issues as how land is sold, inherited and leased, with far-reaching impacts for Timor-Leste’s peaceful development.

Although some recent land titling and registration programs have been quite inclusive on gender issues – which we wholeheartedly support – there have been significant shortcomings in other areas of public consultation and engagement. **The involvement of Timorese people in shaping and preparing land laws is crucial.** This is particularly true to ensure that customary land holders have equally enforceable land rights and other forms of title.

As we requested a year ago, **we continue to call for the government to legislate for improved, timely public access to significant government information**, such as draft legislation, state budgets, tender invitations and results, environmental impact assessments, public expenditure and revenue, **through public consultations that allow sufficient time for consideration and debate across society including rural areas, and dissemination of these documents in – at least – both the official languages, Tetum and Portuguese.** We encourage donors to continue to support the translation of documents into Tetum. The government should ensure the provision of materials and methods specifically targeting women and other disadvantaged groups.

NGOs have an important role in monitoring government actions, due to their independent status, as well as their close relationships with local populations. We therefore request that government recognize NGOs’ role in promoting transparency and accountability. **Specifically, we recommend that the government consult meaningfully and consistently with NGOs and other members of civil society, particularly about new legislation, major projects and reform processes, and take their inputs into account.** Prior, informed public consent is essential to meaningful democracy.

We welcome the role of the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Civil Society and the provision of funds for civil society support of government priorities. We were pleased to participate in the process of developing criteria for the award of funds and would welcome an opportunity to define, together with development partners, a clearer understanding of the nature and role of civil society in Timor-Leste. However, we were concerned by the non-transparency of grant awards during 2008 and by the under-staffing of an office charged with the responsible distribution of \$6 million in 2009. We urge government and donors to remember that this funding is intended to enable NGOs to implement programs, rather than to purchase the acquiescence of civil society in political or social debates. **We urge donors and government to consider how the office can coordinate with other government-supported granting programs and ensure non-politicization, transparency in decision making and accountability in the use of government funds.** We also suggest that government granting programs coordinate with and share lessons learned from development partner funding programs for civil society development.

Furthermore, we urge development partners to provide multi-year funding for civil society partners to enable longer-term planning and more sustained engagement in the development process, and to keep administrative overheads to a minimum so that NGOs can maximize the time and energy available to carry out their work.

Independent media is a pillar of good governance, ensuring access to information and freedom of speech. Concerned by the legal process against a journalist for alleged defamation, we encourage the government and parliament to remove criminal defamation from the Penal Code, either with the new Penal Code or by specific legislation, and to drop all such existing cases.

We are concerned that some credible allegations of corruption have not been followed by legal proceedings, and that many cases referred by the Provedor have not yet been brought to trial. **The government's efforts towards transparency and accountability would be reinforced if offenders of corruption were charged and prosecuted for their crimes,** and information about these prosecutions were made publicly available. A clear statement of what constitutes corruption, accompanied by a government-wide commitment not to engage in it, would go a long way toward preventing it in the future.

Timor-Leste increased its state budget by 96% between 2008 and 2009, a spending spree encouraged by last year's oil and gas revenues, which are likely to be the highest ever to Timor-Leste. However, this is neither wise nor sustainable, notwithstanding the tremendous needs facing the country's people, and erodes the principle of intergenerational equity which underlies the Petroleum Fund.

Last week, oil-dependent countries as diverse as Nigeria and Venezuela announced sharp cuts in their 2009 expenditure budgets. Timor-Leste's 2009 budget is also based on an unrealistic oil price projection of \$60/barrel, as well as spending above the Estimated Sustainable Income during 2009 and future years. **We hope that development partners will work with government to revise the budget to be more prudent, and to help Timor-Leste plan and move toward an economy and funding sources which can provide for the future,** as Bayu-Undan will be used up in 15 years and revenues from other fields are likely to be less than previously anticipated. Timor-Leste and donors should prioritize development of non-oil sectors of the local economy, moving away from oil-fueled spending to import rice, build transitional infrastructure, and distribute money and benefits to individuals. We encourage

donors to help Timor-Leste learn from the experiences of other countries rich in extractive resources but poor in personal wealth, to avoid the “resource curse” which nearly always results from the temptation to satisfy today’s desires by squandering the nonrenewable entitlement of future generations.

Norway, whose Petroleum Fund provided the model for Timor-Leste, reported last month that its fund lost 23.3% during 2008, largely due to a 40.7% decline in the value of its equities holdings. So far, Timor-Leste has wisely restricted its investments to safer government bonds, and we encourage the government to continue to avoid investments which put the Fund’s principal at risk.

Development of the judicial system

We note, and support, the ongoing investment by government and development partners in developing the judicial system. **There is, however, still the need for further investment in human resources – judges, prosecutors and administration staff – to enable the courts to run more smoothly and promptly, and strengthen popular commitment to the national legal system.** Furthermore, recognizing that language barriers frequently impede timely access to justice, all Timor-Leste laws and decree-laws should be translated into Tetum and published on the internet, in the *Jornal da Republica*, and as books. **It is also crucial to ensure that legal communications occur in languages, especially Tetum, understood by all stakeholders – including complainants, the accused and legal professionals themselves.** Defendants and victims have a right to insist on Tetum or their own language, as they generally have fewer language resources than judges, lawyers, or prosecutors.

We welcome the Ministry of Justice’s efforts to seriously look at the role of the traditional justice system and conduct public consultations, but we are concerned that the current effort to develop a customary law is rushed, incomplete and thus unlikely to improve access to justice. We strongly suggest that the Ministry of Justice invest more time and resources in grassroots consultation and coordination in order to develop a sound and effective customary law. In particular, we highlight the need for discussion of accountability and enforcement mechanisms, consideration of women’s rights, recognition of the Constitution as the supreme authority and greater involvement of civil society actors in this reform process.

While the overwhelming majority of people obtain justice through local mechanisms, many donors choose to prioritize support for the formal justice system, which risks establishing a two-tier system of justice. We are concerned that by neglecting local or quasi-governmental authorities, such as elected councils at the suco and aldeia level, while strengthening the legal authority of the government, these programs could lead to a hybrid system of justice of governance, likely to be costly, difficult to manage, wrought with accountability issues, benefiting those with political influence, and insufficient in providing the basic features of a state.

We are concerned that recent criticisms of particular judges threaten to undermine the fundamental principle of the independence of the judiciary, and therefore call for respect for the independence of the judiciary and for the removal of people with political party positions from judicial oversight bodies.

Security

As the security situation gradually improves, there is an opportunity to focus more on delivery of essential services. Doing so will contribute to stability, create jobs and establish the conditions for economic growth.

Just as crucial, however, is to create a sense of community wellbeing at a micro level, ensuring community-led development, which can generate perceptions of safety and belonging. We cannot stress highly enough the importance of engaging young people in meaningful work and social activities. Youth represent a substantial and growing proportion of the country's population, and it is essential that they develop their sense of ownership of the development process. There is an ongoing need for dialogue and peace building programs, to ensure that the root causes of the 2006 crisis are adequately addressed. **Government and donors should recognize that NGOs have a significant role in community-level engagement and peace building, target their participation, create opportunities for their involvement and ensure they have the resources to do this important work.**

We recognize that the government and its development partners have invested considerably in strengthening the police and military of Timor-Leste in accordance with the fifth National Priority. **Ongoing efforts are needed to ensure that Timor-Leste and international security forces are accountable to the government and people of Timor-Leste,** as allegations of past misconduct have not yet been resolved.

Return and reintegration of internally displaced people (IDPs)

We commend the government on its success to date in supporting the return and reintegration of many IDPs, as an important first step towards building a peaceful future. There still remain, however, nearly 10,000 IDPs still without permanent housing, including over 2,000 IDPs living in transitional shelters. We therefore endorse the government's commitment to IDP reintegration as a part of its fourth National Priority, and **encourage the government to conduct another verification exercise for existing occupants of transitional shelters in order to begin the process of offering individual case management with a view to identifying or providing durable solutions for these families or households.** Recognising that housing is a basic human right, and in accordance with the Pinheiro principles, concrete plans for either direct compensation, allocation of land or direct assistance to the most vulnerable in the transitional shelter population should be implemented and finalized.

Due to the rapid rate of returns, community and IDP sensitization will continue to require ongoing support and attention over time. Given fragile community relations in some areas, the reintegration process may result in significant challenges, linked to some of the issues described in this statement. We recommend that the government redouble its efforts with regard to the National Recovery Strategy and reinforce inter-ministerial cooperation as necessary to identify and implement solutions to ongoing challenges related to security, socio-economic development, housing and land policies, and confidence building. It is imperative to support a reintegration process that is sustainable and robust enough to minimize the possibility of conflict between IDPs and the community, which would render reintegration efforts made thus far redundant.

Furthermore, we must all remember that as long as there remain IDPs in Timor-Leste, they are in need of basic services delivered in accordance with international humanitarian principles and standards. The government should ensure budgets, structures and capacity to provide basic services to all IDPs during this recovery phase, including practical assistance to access infrastructure (such as water and electricity) in areas of return or relocation..

Development: towards the Millennium Development Goals

Development, especially for Timor-Leste's rural poor, is essential if Timor-Leste is to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as outlined in the National Priorities. The concentration of resources and opportunities in Dili continues to exacerbate urban pull. This decreases the rural labour force and is likely to exacerbate the burden on women and girls as they stay in rural areas with increased responsibilities for family care and food production, while men work in the cities.

While the government is taking clear steps towards decentralization, and has made rural development one of its National Priorities, rural areas still lag behind urban areas in terms of access to services. Budget cuts to rural sanitation and water are only one example. Rural development requires an integrated approach, including raising the capacity of local leaders, staffing and supplying Community Health Centres and Health Posts, supporting low-cost, sustainable agriculture, investing in education, hygiene and sanitation, and improving roads and water infrastructure, all in line with clear benchmarks, following the Millennium Development Goals. **We therefore call on government, donors and the UN to commit to prioritising development in rural areas, and donors in particular to commit multi-year funding to rural development.** We also call on the government to clarify ministerial roles and responsibilities for coordination and planning at the district and municipal levels.

Rural development in many sectors needs to strike a balance between providing essential services immediately and strengthening capacity in the longer term. **For service delivery today, greatest capacity frequently lies with national and international NGOs and they should be supported to scale up programs, with a particular focus on strengthening the resources and capacity of Timor-Leste's NGOs and local communities to be able to meet these needs in the future without international advisers.** In parallel, capacity strengthening of local government must take place, including human resource development plans.

At the same time, rural to urban migration is a reality not only in Timor-Leste but around the world. As such, it is necessary to invest in improving service delivery in the urban areas and to identify and allocate land so the development of new neighborhoods may be established.

The right to food

We welcome the first National Priority's target – in line with the first Millennium Development Goal – to reform the National Food Security Policy Committee and to revise the National Food Security policy. We further welcome the formation of district Food Security Committees and mechanisms for the collection and analysis of food security data, as these coordinated district efforts can make a major difference to the management of food

insecurity. **We call upon the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Food Security to provide political support to these important 2009 targets.**

We remind the government and donors that although currently many organizations are focusing on food relief, it is important to consider longer term policies and programs, as well as to recognize the impacts of short-term relief policies on future food security and sovereignty.

While we understand the intention of the government in subsidizing rice, **the current subsidy program for imported rice is not sustainable and will stifle local production** reducing incentives to cultivate rice and other food crops, weakening food security and undermining rural livelihoods. Greater donor and government support for incentives to farmers, as well as distribution and logistical assistance, is needed to develop local procurement for food aid and strengthen local food systems.

In order to ensure the right to food for the majority of Timor-Leste's people, who are subsistence farmers, **the government and donors must increase their attention to low-cost, sustainable agriculture.** This will strengthen existing rural livelihoods through developing technical skills in areas such as composting and household food storage to minimise post-harvest losses, and by avoiding dependency on high-cost inputs which price small-hold farmers out of the market.

Government and donors should focus on local food production rather than the immediate development of non-staple export crops such as candlenut, vanilla and biofuels, which are more vulnerable in international markets. Furthermore, donors should cease their use of aid to create markets for their own products, such as hybrid or patented seeds.

The right to health

Recognizing that all people have a right to health, and that utilization of health services is low, acknowledging the significant progress made through the expansion of Integrated Services for Community Health (SISCa), the recruitment of community health facilitators (Promotor Saude Familia, PSF), and the commitment to health systems and service delivery in the National Priorities, **we urge the government to further improve access to good quality health services across the country.** This is particularly important for women's health, sexual and reproductive health, nutrition and maternal and child health. As an example, many rural women report that dismissive attitudes of midwives discourage them from seeking medical assistance during their pregnancies. **We call for: higher standards and closer supervision to ensure quality of care in both public and private health facilities;** efficient procurement and distribution of medicines; a patient-centred focus from health workers, recognition of professionalism and responsiveness to patient needs; and enabling communities to promote their own health and prevent illness by improved water and sanitation and well-integrated health promotion initiatives.

Cases of HIV infection are reportedly growing in Timor-Leste, but people lack awareness of what HIV / AIDS is and how it can be prevented, and stigma often discourages people from seeking treatment when they are infected. **We therefore call on the government and donors to take a proactive stance, recognizing that legislation can never completely control sexual relations between citizens, but the government can and should actively encourage**

safer sex, and prevent HIV / AIDS from becoming a greater problem, with potentially massive human and financial costs, and great damage to Timor-Leste's chances at sustainable development.

Water, sanitation and hygiene are central to the achievement of many other human rights. The rural sanitation and water sector is off-track to meet Millennium Development Goals and national targets. Lack of access to these services is the greatest contributing factor to child deaths in Timor-Leste.

We acknowledge progress in developing a sector strategy for rural water, sanitation and hygiene and the intention to improve coordination between government and various donors through a Sector Wide Approach. **We urge government to continue with the process to develop the first ever Sanitation Policy for Timor-Leste.** The government has reduced the rural water and sanitation budget, making the biggest cuts in rural sanitation. **We urge government to commit sufficient funding to make these rural water, sanitation and hygiene strategies achievable.**

The right to education

The Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education, like the Government's third National Priority of human resource development, requires continued focus and commitment of resources. Given that children who attend preschools are more likely than their peers to transition successfully to primary school, we urge the government to recognize the importance of early childhood education. As children in many schools, even in Dili, still have to sit on the floor due to the lack of chairs and desks, **we call for increased and targeted support to rural schools**, through teacher training and provision of adequate resources within the shortest possible timeframe.

We support the government's commitment to youth participation and the preparation of youth for the labour market. In order to address social and economic inequality and promote human resources development, we call for visible and practical programs related to vocational education, as well as clear university accreditation processes. Primary and secondary curricula should incorporate agriculture, technical and rural livelihood education, equipping students with relevant skills for Timor-Leste's workforce.

We also remind the government that education plays a vital role in supporting the development of people's cultural identity, and that it is much easier for children to learn in their first language. At this crucial stage in the nation's development, it is especially important that the government invest resources in the development and promotion of Tetum as a vibrant official and national language. **We encourage the government to commit itself to integration of Timorese culture and languages into the curriculum, to ensure a relevant and culturally-appropriate learning environment for Timorese children.**

The third Millennium Development Goal calls for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. In rural areas, only 30 to 40% of girls make it to high school and women's literacy is less than 50%. Research from various countries shows that better educated women have healthier children and greater autonomy. As such, we call on the government to pay special attention to education for girls and women. **In particular, given that young married girls, or girls who fall pregnant, frequently have no way to finish**

their primary or secondary school qualifications, we urge the government to provide options for ensure they can access their right to education. Furthermore, given that long walking distances to school can leave girls and young women feeling vulnerable and reduce their likelihood of school completion, we encourage the government to ensure that schools are within reasonable walking distance from their pupils' homes.

In the petroleum and other sectors, the government and donors have prioritized sending public servants and others abroad to study at foreign universities. While this can provide needed short-term expertise, for the long term it is essential to strengthen Timor-Leste's own secondary and tertiary education systems, especially in technical subjects. This will advance self-reliance and sustainability, open more opportunities for women, and reduce dependency on donor support in the future.

The rights of people with disabilities

In Timor-Leste, persons with disabilities have been largely left out of the development processes, and are the poorest of the poor. Children with disabilities are frequently excluded from education; adults are often excluded from work. Furthermore, there is no national strategy to protect the right of persons with disabilities. We therefore **urge the government to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol** and by doing so make a commitment to ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy human rights on an equal basis with others. We acknowledge and support the government's establishment of the disability subsidy. **We also urge the government to increase its focus on service delivery to people with disabilities, ensure social safety net provisions, and mainstream disability in all development activities.**

Environment: the rights of future generations

Environmental issues provide an opportunity for Timor-Leste to set up good systems and become an example to other countries in the region on how to achieve the seventh Millennium Development Goal of ensuring environmental sustainability. Timor-Leste has valuable natural resources, such as coastlines, fisheries and sustainable agricultural practices, that should be safeguarded in order to protect both the environment and people's livelihoods.

We support the government's initial steps on the environment, such as its accession to the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, and its participation in the regional Coral Triangle Initiative, aimed to slow the degradation of coral colonies and safeguard vulnerable species from the impact of global warming.

But environmental issues pose a particular risk to Timor-Leste, as an island state dependent on its environment for its people's lives and livelihoods, and vulnerable to severe weather impacts including droughts, landslides, erosion and flooding, which are exacerbated by climate change. Deforestation, accelerated by a lack of awareness of the impact of cutting forests and not replanting trees, poses a serious challenge.

Furthermore, some of the larger donor-supported coffee-based initiatives are weak on accountability for environmental management. During certain times of year, local people

cannot use local river water due to pollution, and prices to farmers fluctuate. We urge these projects to learn from several smaller coffee projects, which ensure fair conditions, good environmental management and farmer involvement in decision making.

We are concerned about the heavy oil power plants, work on which has already begun, without adequately considering other electricity technologies or the prior Environmental Impact Assessment as is required by law. We fear that the project as currently planned undercuts sustainable development, could squander public resources, and may endanger people's livelihoods and health. We encourage the government to provide comprehensive public information, comply with applicable laws (including a prior, independent Environmental Impact Assessment and fair open tender processes), consult with local communities, define environmental requirements and risks, and incorporate civil society into transparent, objective oversight of activities at the three power generating sites, many substations, and hundreds of kilometers of transmission lines which comprise this project.

The government should make and disseminate clear laws related to the environment, including sanctions for violations of these laws, and ensure that environmental and social impacts are considered prior to the approval of major development projects. It should also take concrete measures to support reforestation, improve emergency responses to natural and man-made environmental damage, and implement options for clean energy.

Donors, as industrialized countries and major producers of greenhouse gas emissions, should reduce carbon and other emissions in their home countries and support climate justice initiatives, whereby the people, companies and nations who have benefited from destruction of the global climate have the principal responsibility to stop and remediate such activities.

Effective aid: towards stronger partnerships for development

The eighth Millennium Development Goal calls for a Global Partnership for Development – in line with the sixth National Priority's focus on aid effectiveness. In Timor-Leste, several steps could be taken to improve partnerships between government, donors, communities and civil society.

The public frequently is not provided with information on the impact of development programs, in contradiction to the Accra Agenda for Action, which calls for sharing information with the public about the results of development expenditure. **We urge the government and donors to agree on indicators for measuring aid effectiveness, and involve civil society in this process.**

A recent survey by the World Bank and the government of Timor-Leste showed that poverty in Timor-Leste had gone up from 36.3 per cent in 2001 to 49.9 per cent in 2007/8. This suggests that the combination of overseas development assistance combined with government and international agency policies have not yet been as effective as is needed. This is partly because a substantial proportion of development expenditure returns to donor countries through payments to international personnel or purchase of materials from their countries, rather than supporting the Timorese economy. Furthermore, aid is frequently based on ideas and political motivations from foreign donors, rather than community needs. Development assistance is often experienced by government and civil society through short-term, ad hoc

projects. This remains the case despite recognition that the outcomes sought by programming cannot be achieved in the span of six months or a year. Rather the challenges we face together are generational challenges that require comprehensive responses. Development assistance could be better targeted to address the long-term root causes of poverty and conflict in the country, particularly if granting cycles were extended.

According to the alignment principle of the Paris Declaration, donors have the obligation to provide aid according to the National Development Plan of the recipient government. As mentioned earlier, long-term plans, supported by donors, are crucial for achieving sustainable development. Donors and the government must create a transparent mechanism to take responsibility according to the Paris Declaration principle of mutual accountability, in order to ensure that development is sustainable, protects the environment, and promotes social justice, gender equality and human rights.

We therefore urge donors to continue to support the development of Timor-Leste, and implement the principles of the Paris Declaration that aid should be given without conditions, and that it should be provided and evaluated transparently. We encourage the government to manage aid from donors to support development objectives that are sustainable, and respect human rights, gender equality, social justice and the environment.

We encourage development partners to review their development models and policies and pursue collaborative planning. In particular, we encourage them to discuss how to maintain practical partnerships with the government while minimizing unnecessary demands on local institutions, developing a clear roadmap for capacity transfer to local authorities or civil society organisations, and ensuring a steadfast commitment to human rights. We also encourage donors to ensure that companies from their countries act ethically and legally in Timor-Leste. We offer our support to this discussion process.

We note an increasing openness in some ministries to work with civil society, and we appreciate the leading role that some ministries are playing in coordinating these sectors. It seems we all agree that civil society is important to the development of Timor-Leste, but there is little consensus as to how to engage it, and even how to define it. Grassroots people and organizations were central to the struggle for independence, yet today's leaders and donors often perceive ordinary citizens and civil society organizations as helpless children or obedient program implementers, rather than having the capacity to make constructive contributions to program design and policy decisions. We encourage the development partners to consider more directly the roles they see for civil society and to engage with civil society organisations to elicit their perspectives on how to enhance cooperation and open dialogue between civil society, government and donors.

Conclusion

This meeting is entitled “Goodbye, Conflict, Welcome Development”. However, we believe that peaceful “conflict” – open debate and discussion among people with varying needs, desires, interests and perspectives – is healthy in any society, especially a young democracy like Timor-Leste, and is a necessary element of sustainable, just development. Although we welcome the accomplishments of government, donors and others in reducing violent conflict which violates people's rights, such conflicts cannot be suppressed forever, but must be

transformed into the healthy give-and-take of a multiparty democracy. We continue to ready to contribute our experiences and expertise to these debates.

We NGOs, national and international, remain proud of our contribution to social justice and sustainable development in Timor-Leste and we appreciate the support from development partners which has made this possible. **We urge the government and all development partners to commit themselves to pursuing justice and accountability, overcoming political constraints, and to renew their focus on meeting the human rights of the country's most marginalized, and particularly the rural poor, in order improve the lives of Timor-Leste's citizens and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.**

We look forward to working with Timorese communities, the government and donors in building a stronger and peaceful future for all Timorese people.

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