



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE TO THE UNITED
NATIONAL OFFICE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA**

**Oral Response [as spoken, transcribed by La'o Hamutuk]
by Ambassador Joaquim da Fonseca**

**to the Report on Country Visit to Timor-Leste
by Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty
Ms. Madalena Sepúlveda-Carmona**

20th Session of the Human Rights Council

Geneva, 21 June 2012

Thank you Madam President.

Timor-Leste thanks the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty for her visit to Timor-Leste in November 2011. We appreciate the views exchanged during her meetings with various Government officials.

Since the Government of Timor-Leste took charge of planning and implementation of development in the country in 2002, merely ten years ago, many advice and criticisms have been voiced by development critiques. They are highly sophisticated, some were drawn from development experiences, others are desk work result inspired by ideals from development textbooks. Therefore, it has been the intention of Timor-Leste to exchange views on more pragmatic, realistic and practical human rights oriented views from the Special Rapporteur on options available to Timor-Leste to best guarantee the human rights of citizens still living in extreme poverty, based on an independent assessment of development policies and practices in the country.

Most of the shortcomings identified in the report have been openly acknowledged by the Government of Timor-Leste in various official documents, including those cited in the report. It would be inaccurate, however, to depict the situation in Timor-Leste with regards to the human rights of citizens living in poverty as though they resulted from a deliberate act of the Government to marginalize the vulnerable segment of our society, or it is a result of neglect due to lack of understanding of human rights, as expressed in paragraph 16 of the mission report to Timor-Leste.

The Timorese understanding of, and commitment to, human rights is best expressed in the Constitution of the Republic, which recognizes guarantees for protection, promotion and fulfillment of Social, Economic and Cultural Rights as well as Civil and Political Rights, reflected in the International Human Rights Standards. The implementation of these Constitutional guarantees in Timor-Leste, however, is not simple in practice. For almost every single human right provided for in the Constitution, a new institution, and a new legislation or policy, or

program, needed to be put in place upon restoration of independence. Successive governments of Timor-Leste have made the effort to meet this challenge, giving equal attention to all human rights. There are many competing priorities and challenges, but options are few. Choices had to be made, and they have been made carefully.

Extreme poverty is still a major obstacle for the enjoyment of human rights by many Timorese, and we are firmly committed to remove this obstacle. As a short term and immediate response to the needs of the most vulnerable citizens, different schemes were put in place to provide social benefits to former combatants of the liberation, the elderly, citizens with disabilities, and single female-headed households. Scholarships were also provided for children belonging to economically vulnerable families.

A more comprehensive and long term policy for social protection is needed. An Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the Formulation of Social Protection Policy was established to look into this matter. The Working Group is currently conducting studies and public consultation to formulate a universal social protection policy for Timor-Leste. This policy will provide a more solid basis for the protection of the most vulnerable segment of our society.

We share the views of the Special Rapporteur that the effort to reduce poverty shall be based on inclusive growth and development. Currently, more than 50% of the wage employment is provided by the public sector, including through the establishment of new institutions essential for the functioning of the state. The concentration of most of these institutions in the Capital explains the seemingly inequality in incomes between the capital and the rural areas. To ensure a more equitable, inclusive and decentralized development, the Government of Timor-Leste has made agriculture and rural development a priority. And to support these, we have invested a substantial amount of funds from the State Budget this year in infrastructure. Good infrastructure will not only support the development of infrastructure, but also will facilitate better enjoyment of other services.

Community participation in the design and implementation of inclusive development policies is also strengthened in the near future. In 2013, Timor-Leste will conduct election of Municipalities which will provide more opportunities for community participation in the design and implementation, as well as monitoring, of development.

While certain premises in the report could have taken current reality of Timor-Leste into account, we appreciate the analysis and recommendations of the Special Rapporteur. Timor-Leste will give serious consideration to these recommendations. Where applicable, we will use them to inform our new policies.

Timor-Leste remains committed to a the effort to alleviate extreme poverty through various development activities in general, as well as through targeted social policies We welcome a continuing exchange of views with the Special Rapporteur as well as other UN mechanisms.

Thank you madam President.

For more information and documents on the 2012 report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights on her visit to Timor-Leste, visit <http://www.laohamutuk.org/econ/SRPoverty/12SREP.htm>