

Press Release

Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers of March 28, 2020

The Council of Ministers met at the Dili Convention Center and continued to consider the Civil Protection Law, presented on March 25, by the Acting Minister of the Interior, Filomeno da Paixão de Jesus and the Secretary of State for Civil Protection, Alexandrino de Araújo. This Draft Law contains the fundamental principles of civil protection, defines and organizes the bases of civil protection in Timor-Leste, highlights the Civil Protection Authority as an authority that will shape the entire civil protection system and defines the structure of the National Civil Protection System at regional and municipal level. The Law was approved by the Council of Ministers.

Acting Finance Minister Sara Lobo Brites gave a presentation on the detailed data on the expected cost of the COVID-19 response package and of the flood damages, included in a request to the National Parliament for authorisation to carry out an extraordinary transfer of \$100 million USD from the Petroleum Fund. This package includes, in the area of prevention and combat of COVID-19, the purchase of medicines, materials and equipment, expenses associated with quarantine, isolation and treatment sites and expenses related to measures to ensure the distribution and supply of essential goods, including food products. For social protection, home support and recovery from natural disasters, they include food support, the provision of medicines and materials for victims of natural disasters. Part of the value will be applied to economic recovery measures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular for the creation of low-rate credit lines, for support to small and medium-sized enterprises and direct financial support for citizens and businesses. The Minister of Finance will now present this detailed package of measures and their costs to the National Parliament's Committee C.

The Acting Minister of Health, Élia António de Araújo dos Reis Amaral, presented a draft Decree-Law, approved by the Council of Ministers, concerning the first amendment to Decree-Law No. 18/2004, of November 23, on private health units. The Decree-Law, which regulates the conditions for licensing, operation and supervision of health units, was approved in an economic, social and cultural context, which has since undergone profound changes. Thus, with this amendment, the technical requirements necessary for the granting of licenses are revised, the nomenclature and clarity of the concepts of the legal regime that regulate this activity are adapted, and the possibility is also given to polyclinics of health services to be able to make hospitalizations, responding to the need to increase the supply of the private sector in the area of health, while relieving the pressure of the national health service, it responds the concerns of foreign investors and reduces the State's expenditure on medical care abroad.

The Council of Ministers approved the draft Government Decree, presented by the Prime Minister, Taur Matan Ruak, on measures to implement the declaration of a state of emergency. Considering the discovery last December of a new strain of the corona virus, called SARS-Cov2 and its rapid spread that led the World Health Organization to declare the disease caused by this virus, COVID-19, as a pandemic, the Government has been adopting a set of preventive measures. Despite the efforts undertaken and the measures adopted and implemented, on March 14, the Ministry of Health announced the first positive test case of COVID-19. In view of the need to strengthen and implement new measures to further reduce the risks of the spread of SARS-Cov2 among the population residing in Timor-Leste, the Government proposed to the President of the Republic the decree of a state of emergency. In view of the declaration of a state of emergency, the Government through this Decree ensures its implementation by adopting the necessary measures that prevent the disease, contain the pandemic, save lives and ensure the subsistence of supply chains of essential goods and services for our population, even if they may limit some fundamental rights and freedoms. The state of emergency is in force between 00:00 hours on March 28, 2020 and 23:59 hours on April 26, 2020 and applies to the entire national territory. The measures adopted are taken with respect for constitutional limits and following the guidelines of the World Health Organization and the example of other States and seek to reduce the risk for new cases of COVID-19 in Timor-Leste.

The Prime Minister also presented an Order on the 2nd amendment to Order No. 005/II/2020 of February 18, which "establishes the interministerial committee for the coordination of the implementation of measures to prevent and control the outbreak of the new Coronavirus. With this amendment the interministerial committee is now chaired by the Prime Minister. **ENDS**