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SPEECH BY DR MARI ALKATIRI, DEPUTY (MP) AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF FRETILIN REPRESENTING THE FRETILIN PARLIAMENTARY BENCH DURING DECLARATION OF VOTE ON THE LAW ON THE GENERAL BUDGET OF THE STATE FOR 2013

DILI, 18 FEBRUARY 2013

Mr. President of the National Parliament!

Mr. Prime Minister!

Illustrious Deputies And Members of the Government!

Excellencies!

With the passing of the 2013 General Budget of the State (GSB) today, we begin a new era of political convergence towards the consolidation of the nation and the democratic state under the rule of law in Timor-Leste. In political theory terms we can say that with the process of approving this GSB, we have established an agreement at the level of the National Parliament for bipartisan political understanding on this issue. It is now up to us to take on board this one-off agreement and converted into an agreement of a strategic nature for the nascent coming decade so as that it can become the decade of inclusive and sustainable peace, stability and development.

Together we have challenged old paradigms and sought to build new ones. Together we will seek to contribute so that the world can also learn to respect difference and consider it as a wealth for the world with the view of avoiding extremisms, from wherever and whatever form these may take.

Ten years after the Restoration of our National Independence we have concluded that interface of the many situations and contexts we have traversed, we can fill ourselves with courage to advance in synthesis and find solutions. Without doubt that looking for solutions within already exhausted models will only take us to temporary successes, which, in turn, has nothing to guarantee us but a return to failure. It is conscious of this that we have advanced to this agreement for bipartisan political understanding in this Parliament.

With this convergence we have created a new dynamic in the construction of democracy, a new path to strengthen citizenry – a participatory democracy and a responsible citizenry. The FRETILIN bench actively participated in the restructuring of the 2013 GSB and, as a consequence, has taken on the responsibility of voting overwhelmingly in its favour. Consensus has been guaranteed.

For the second time, if I am not mistaken, that the National Parliament has approved by unanimity a proposed law before it. This happened with law number 9/2005 of 3 August, the Petroleum Fund Law and today with the 2013 GSB Law.

It was not a first for this national parliament, this young democracy. The petroleum fund is still the biggest source of financing for our GSB. The law that created this front was approved by unanimity for the

logical reason of it being considered an instrument in the process of strengthening our sovereignty. That is why it is a Sovereign Fund.

Till now there has been an understanding that budgets are instruments exclusively of the government even though called the General State Budget. It was never known how to distinguish clearly between the Government, as a collective responsible for the execution of the programme, with governance, or better, good governance, which is the responsibility not only of Governments but equally the whole society, in particular the other Constitutional Sovereign Bodies and of the instrumental components in the execution, oversight and control process.

In voting in favour we want to send one message. We want to affirm that the GSB belongs to us all. As a political force outside of the Block that comprises the government, we refused to accept the "status quo" of a democracy purely for electoral ends. Democracy will only exist when the model adopted permits the realization of our objectives that are, above all else, the fight against poverty. And ten years after, we no longer doubt the need to walk together. But, FRETILIN does not simply want to dream. We will do all we can to turn the collective dreams of our people into a reality, dreams that once fed our capacity and creativity in responding to the challenges and overcome the dangers we faced.

Mr. President!

Mr. Prime Minister!

Illustrious deputies and members of the government!

Having voted in favour of the 2013 GSB, we feel ownership of it. So, this increases our obligation to guarantee its good limitation, effective and efficient implementation, based on the demand for results without disregarding the fundamental principle of good management of public finances. The issue of the quality of the delivery of services and the relationship between costs and benefits will continue to be the basis in which we involve ourselves.

In this way, FRETILIN will strengthen its oversight function – prior to any act of budget execution and a posteriori – over the 2013 GSB. It is our hope that the whole of the government knows to understand this innovative democratic dynamic and that they cooperate to make it succeed. We also hope that the National Parliament takes initiatives towards approving the adequate and appropriate legislation to strengthen oversight and control of the implementation of the general state budget.

On our part, we will continue outside of the government. But, we will strengthen our oversight role to guarantee that the yearnings of our people are fulfilled. We will make a judgment at the opportune time.

That being all, I thank you very much.

Mari Alkatiri