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Minister of Justice concludes visit to Portugal

Today Timor-Leste's Minister of Justice, H.E. Dionísio Babo Soares, concludes his working visit to Lisbon.

The Minister expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to meet with his Portuguese counterpart H.E. Paula Teixeira da Cruz. He noted that their discussion, which extended over two hours on the 17th of November, was comprehensive and constructive. On the following day Minister Soares was received by the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Portugal, Dr. Joana Marques Vidal, who is also President of the Superior Council of Public Prosecutors.. On the 18th of November a meeting took place with members of the Portuguese Superior Council of the Judiciary, and the Minister was received by its President and Vice President.

In all of these meetings the officials of Portugal were clear in expressing their disappointment regarding the “expulsion of judicial actors”. They also recognised that the young judicial system of Timor-Leste is still facing serious challenges. In terms of bilateral cooperation, the judicial officials noted that they would be guided by the political decision of the Government of Portugal.

Minister Soares regarded the meetings as an important step to restore confidence and mutual respect and emphasised that cooperation between the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Portuguese Republic in the justice sector is now more important than ever, especially in the context of technical, legal and judicial support focusing on the development of human and technical capacity of the Timorese Judicial system.

He noted that recasting the terms of cooperation was consensual and would have as its foundation the shared commitment of both countries to the rule of law and the separation of powers. His Excellency said “Cooperation should be guided by new criteria prioritizing training, mentoring and capacity building so that the exercise of judicial duties in Timor-Leste is returned to Timorese judges.” He expressed confidence in the Portuguese advisors remaining in Timor-Leste and looked forward to working together to capacitate Timorese judicial actors and create an environment where the nation can “stand on its own two feet in the judicial sector, independent and sovereign.”



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“The achievement of that independence”, he said, “should be a cause of great pride amongst the Portuguese who assisted in the judicial sector and a cause for celebration and gratitude for the people of Timor-Leste.”

On the final day of the visit some technical level meetings between the Director General of the Ministry of Justice of Timor-Leste and the Director General of Justice Policy of the Ministry of Justice of Portugal were held. Minister Soares also took the opportunity to meet with Ambassadors from ASEAN countries and with officials from the CPLP Executive to provide clarifications about the latest developments in the justice sector and address issues raised by the international community.

Once these meetings are completed the Justice Minister will fly to Cape Verde where meetings are scheduled with the Minister of Justice, the Prosecutor General and the Superior Council of the Judiciary of Cape Verde. **ENDS**