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MEDIA RELEASE

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Timor-Leste and Holy See ready to sign historic agreement

The Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, His Excellency Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo, and the Cardinal Secretary of State of the Vatican, His Eminence Pietro Parolin, special envoy of His Eminence Pope Francis, are to sign an agreement that establishes the legal framework for relations of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste with the Holy See and the Catholic Church.

The signing of this historic agreement will take place during the visit of Cardinal Parolin to Timor-Leste from August 13th to August 15th, 2015, when His Eminence will participate in the celebrations of the 500th anniversary of the evangelization of the Timorese People. In the Vatican the title of Secretary of State, corresponds to the position of Prime Minister.

Prime Minister H.E. Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo noted "The Catholic Church, over 500 years, has provided a great spiritual, human and material support to the Timorese People, and also contributed decisively to the liberation process of Timor-Leste," adding that "its action is recognized and valued in the Constitution of the Republic. In fact, during the struggle for Independence, it encouraged the people's resistance and legitimized internationally the purposes of the Resistance".

The special relationship between the Holy See and Timor-Leste allows this to be one of the rare occasions that a document such as this is signed outside of the Vatican. The desire of Timor-Leste to conclude a concordat with the Holy See began to materialize in 2006, with the creation of a Commission to discuss the terms of the agreement.

The Prime Minister explained that "the Catholic Church continues to be a central reference for the population and continues to support our journey along the path of national development, especially in the area of education. All this justifies that Timor-Leste is the country with the highest percentage of Catholic population in the world".

During his visit to Timor-Leste Cardinal Pietro Parolin has scheduled courtesy meetings with the President of the Republic, His Excellency Taur Matan Ruak, and with the President of the National Parliament, His Excellency Vicente Guterres. The Cardinal will be received with an Honor Guard at the Government Palace in Dili, where he will meet with the Prime Minister, His Excellency Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo.



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The Timorese Prime Minister, reflecting on the agreement to be signed with the representative of the Holy See said "It will be a historic milestone in an historic moment".

On the last day of the visit to the country, on August 15th, Cardinal Pietro Parolin will preside the Eucharistic celebrations of 500 years of evangelization of the Timorese People, which will take place in Tasi Tolu, in Dili.
ENDS

