



GOVERNO DE  
TIMOR-LESTE

**Opening statement by the Head of the Delegation of Timor-Leste H. E. Ivo  
Valente, Ministry of Justice of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste at the  
70.<sup>th</sup> session of Committee on the Right of the Child**

**Geneva, Switzerland**

**September 25, 2015**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored and privileged to represent the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste in the presentation of its Second and Third Periodic Reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and lead this delegation in this constructive and interactive dialogue.

Before I proceed with the presentation of the reports allow me, Mr. Chairman, to introduce the members of my delegation: the Deputy-Minister of Education, Ms. Dulce Soares, the Ambassador of Timor-Leste to the United Nations in Geneva, Mr. Marciano da Silva, the Commissioner on the Rights of the Child, Ms. Maria Barreto and representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Justice, Education, Health, Social Solidarity, Defense and from the State Secretariat for Employment Policy and Vocational Training.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

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The promotion and protection of the rights of the child is a central issue in our national policy, as reflected in the Strategic Development Plan (2011 - 2030) and in the Program of the VI Constitutional Government.

Timor-Leste became a sovereign State on 20 May 2002.

Since this historical milestone, Timor-Leste has ratified most of the human rights treaties included the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It reflects that Timor-Leste is strongly committed to upholding the universal values and principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mr. Chairman,

With this introduction, allow me to proceed with the presentation of a summary of the second and third periodic reports, submitted in one consolidated report, as recommended by the Committee in its Concluding Observations adopted on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2008.

This report outlines the key measures and initiatives adopted by the Government in implementing the Convention covering the period of 2007 to 2012. It includes the consideration by the State Party to the recommendations of the Concluding Observations of the Committee. It also prioritize future concerted actions in order to facilitate the State party's implementation of the Convention. At the same time, recognizing the challenges in fulfilling its international obligations.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we are approaching to celebrate 25 years of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this is a golden opportunity to constructively discuss with the Committee and present

the efforts made by the Government of Timor-Leste concerning the realization of our Children's rights.

The Government of Timor-Leste upholds the rights of the Child in all areas in line with the obligations contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other Human Rights instruments to which Timor-Leste is Party to.

The Government's unwavering commitment is reflected in measures undertaken by it to meet the treaty obligations since the submission of its Initial Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2007.

After the submission of its first Report Timor-Leste has adopted a range of legal instruments and implemented them as part of the on-going reform of its legal framework, which contributed to the improvement of the protection of Children's rights as enshrined in the Convention.

The report outlines the legislation that has been enacted since the previous reporting period that provides for protection of children's rights and interests.

This includes the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, the Civil Code, and the Basic Law on Education, the Law against Domestic Violence, the Witness Protection Law, the Labor Law and the Penal Execution Regime.

However, we would like to reaffirm to this august Committee that Timor-Leste is undertaking its efforts to reach a greater degree of legal protection for all the children. A number of laws have been developed, and are now in different phases of our legislative process.

In this context and considering its importance, I have to mention the Tutelary and Education Law (Juvenile Justice), for minors aged from 12 until 16 years old, consequently exempt from criminal liability; and the Special Regime for persons with 16 years of age until 21, that establishes a special regime applicable for these adolescents, avoiding the subsidiary application

of the general rules of the Penal Code. It is a great pleasure to inform the Committee that booth laws have already been submitted to the Council of Ministers for deliberation.

In accordance with Timor-Leste domestic law, we use the legal concept of minor, not child or children, depending if we are speaking about Civil Code majority, penal or criminal liability, active electoral capacity, or the regime established in the Labor Law, in each of these situation we tried to adequately protected the best interest of the child.

I should also underline that the authorities of Timor-Leste's Government are committed to combating trafficking in children and to assisting victims of this trafficking.

The new Law against Human Trafficking was approved by the Council of Ministers. It contains special and specific provisions concerning child protection, it grants privileged access to social protection services and assistance.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Allow me to draw your attention to some achievements made in regard to Education. I would like to refer that, in relation to the principle of non-discrimination, the Basic Law of Education provides that education is universal, mandatory and free for all children without exception.

The National Education Strategic Plan and the Annual Action Plan of the Ministry of Education guarantee that education is for all without discrimination and underlines the importance of improving gender balance at schools.

The Priority Program 6 focuses on a "Social Inclusion Policy". This policy aims to remove barriers to the participation and learning for girls and women, the disadvantaged, the disabled and out-of-school children. It will ensure the same right of access to all levels of education for girls and boys.

As the Prime-Minister of Timor-Leste, His Excellency, Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo recently affirmed sustained “Education is indeed a strategic and transversal area that impacts every sector. A country like Timor-Leste, where over 50 % of the population is under 19 years old, needs to focus on the education and on the technical and professional qualification of our young people.”

Mr. Chairman,

As previously stated, Timor-Leste has undertaken steps, in close cooperation with national and international agencies, in order to increase, for example, birth registration.

In this regard, I should like to point out that the final draft of the Civil Registry Code includes an explanatory provision which maintains a rule created by UNTAET that intends to clarify the compulsory birth registration legal regime, stabilizing the work led by the National Directorate for Registry and Notaries, especially the one that has been perform since 2011 and that made possible for hamlets chiefs and *Suco* chiefs to deliver registration services and assure the protection of the fundamental right to an identity.

Concerning public education, we are going to conduct a project, that will start on the 20 of November, designated "Justice goes to school" that aims to alert young students about our country's justice system and to promote the rights of the child.

In order to comply with our international obligations, we are now in the process of finalizing the construction project of our Youth Centre for Juvenile Justice.

To protect the rights of children with disabilities, the Ministry of Health has worked with both national and international partners to develop specific activities to ensure the realization of their fundamental rights. In the near future, the Ministry of Health is planning to collaborate with partners to develop a comprehensive policy and strategy for the implementation of activities for children's with disabilities throughout the country.

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On the other hand, the Ministry of Health has developed a strategic plan for the period 2011-2030, defining in-depth child protection as a priority and consequently mainstreaming the principle of the best interest of the child in all programs and activities.

This plan establishes all the strategies and areas of priority for the implementation of health services throughout the country and gives priority to the expansion of the immunization program.

In this regard, the National Measles, Rubella and Polio Immunization campaign conducted by the Government of Timor-Leste officially ended this August, following the enormous efforts made in the health sectors reaching children under 15 years of age and based on 2010 census data the campaign has reached 93 % of all Timorese children under the age of 15 years old.

In this regard, I should like to inform that Timor-Leste has made a remarkable progress in the area of children's health over the past ten years with a 23 % reduction in child mortality recorded between 2003 and 2010. The immunization coverage of children aged between 12 and 23 months almost tripled over the same period. Vaccines in Timor-Leste have already successfully eliminated smallpox, polio and maternal and neo natal tetanus.

Also the implementation of the policy for the Integrated Services for Community Health (SISCA) in all Municipalities and villages across Timor-Leste made possible the delivering of primary health care to the community. In relation to the Basic Package of Services Strategy, that entails the provision to each village a designated team of health professionals, Timor-Leste provides integrated health services to the community, including health care provision and treatment, immunization, nutrition, family planning, community development activities to improve access to health information and other health services.

In addition, the Health Promotion Program focuses on behavior change through SISCA targeting pregnant women to seek antenatal care and to advise them to give birth in a health facility with a skilled birth attendant present.

The Ministry of Health provides training to midwives and nurses on family planning counseling, family planning services and contraception for males and females in health facilities.

Timor-Leste's efforts in health are internationally well recognized and after last year's World Health Organization distinction to the Timor-Leste Malaria Control Program, two weeks ago the Minister for Planning and Strategic Investment, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, was awarded with a distinction in Public Health by the World Health Organization, at the Sixty-eighth Session of the World Health Organization Regional Committee for South-East Asia meeting held in Dili.

Mr. Chairman,

Members of the Committee,

Reflecting the government's commitment to the rights of the children, the organizational structure of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child (NCRC) was approved in May 2014.

The organic law of the VI Constitutional Government transferred the National Commission on the Rights of the Child from the administrative authority of the Minister of Justice to the administrative authority of the Minister of State, Coordinator of Social Affairs and Minister of Education, considering the important role of this National Commission, in defending and safeguarding the rights of the children, advocating "child-friendly" mechanisms and promoting children's rights throughout the country, in partnership with other governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and civil society. This transference will allow a better coordination and a comprehensive development of public policies in social areas that account for a better provision of services to the citizens.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite of the progress that Timor-Leste has made, we are constantly seeking ways to improve the implementation of the rights of the child in our country and I would like also to share with

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this distinguished Committee the obstacles faced by my Government on the implementation of the Convention.

The inexistence of a national central database on children, explains that some Ministries are developing their internal databases and only a few of them are capable of utilize and integrate the collected data in the development of new policies and programs.

Led by the National Commission on the Rights of the Child, with the support of UNICEF, the national action plan for children is in the process of its development and it is under discussion of the Consultative Council, comprising government, NGO's and religious organizations to ensure the ownership by all stakeholders based on the experience of Timor-Leste.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our commitment to the rights of the child is central in our international agenda.

Last June, the fourteenth Conference of Ministers of Justice of the Portuguese Speaking Countries took place in Dili and it approved the Dili Declaration on international protection of children within the Community of Portuguese Language Speaking Countries, culminating two years of work carried out since the establishment of an international working group on this theme, in 2013.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

I would like to express, on behalf of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, our deeply respect and appreciation for the work of this Committee. I am certain that the efforts we have made so far to fulfill our obligations will be duly considered and that we can rely



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on the expertise and assistance of the United Nations system in order to facilitate the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Timor-Leste.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, I should like to extend, on behalf of my delegation, to the distinguished members of the Committee, our deep appreciation for the work of this Committee and we look forward to your comments, questions and any recommendations you may have on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Timor-Leste.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, allow me to recite you a poem of our historic leader in the struggle for independence of Timor-Leste, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão:

“Could I hold between my fingers the whispers of the sea and distribute them to the children, (...) feel with my fingers the kiss of the sea foam and hear the sound of their laughs...”

Let us put together our efforts to continue to provide to the children of the world what is rightfully theirs. Their happiness!

Thank you very much for listening.