



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



**MEDIA
RELEASE**

Dili, 21 March, 2016

Timor-Leste making all necessary preparations for ASEAN membership

This week a delegation from Timor-Leste will travel to Honolulu, Hawaii (USA), to attend the ASEAN Regional Forum Workshop on Improving Fisheries Management. This will be the third ASEAN Regional Forum meeting attended by Timor-Leste this year and another opportunity to consolidate readiness for membership. Full participation in these meetings is one part of a comprehensive program of activities being undertaken nationally to make all necessary preparations for the accession of Timor-Leste to ASEAN.

Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, H.E. Roberto Sarmiento de Oliveira Soares says that since the restoration of independence Timor-Leste's leadership have maintained the priority of "realizing the strategic goal of joining ASEAN." Timor-Leste's membership will strengthen regional integration and have positive political, economic and social impacts for Timor-Leste and the other ASEAN Member States.

In 2011 Timor-Leste's application for membership was submitted. The Vice Minister noted "It is only a matter of time before Timor-Leste joins its brothers and sisters in the ASEAN family." As a country located in South East Asia, recognized as a sovereign state by all ASEAN members, ready to abide by the Charter and willing to carry out the obligations of membership, Timor-Leste fulfills key membership criteria stipulated in the ASEAN Charter Article 6. Admission is decided by consensus by the ASEAN Summit, upon the recommendation of the ASEAN Coordinating Council.

Since Timor-Leste's application in 2011 some of the preparatory steps have included nationwide programs for ASEAN awareness, the establishment of the ASEAN National Secretariat and Focal Points, capacity building through training and dialogue, participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum and other regional and global meetings, the establishment and strengthening of Timor-Leste's embassies in all ASEAN countries and support to ensure the readiness of institutions and civil society for ASEAN participation.

Within Government the introduction and implementation of "ASEAN Blueprints" in national policy development is ensuring that new policies and regulatory frameworks are well aligned and integrated with those of ASEAN.

This year the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation has been working to complete a comprehensive



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analysis of all of Timor-Leste's existing policy and regulatory frameworks, which is to be presented to the Council of Ministers for endorsement. The document being drafted, known as the Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime, shows the extent to which Timor-Leste already meets ASEAN requirements and sets out the steps that need to be taken to achieve full compliance. This will assist the ASEAN Secretariat and ASEAN Members to further understand the current status of national frameworks, strongly signaling the readiness of Timor-Leste and further demonstrating the efforts made to date to properly prepare for undertaking the obligations of an ASEAN member.

Government Spokesperson Minister of State Ágio Pereira noted "ASEAN membership has been a national foreign policy priority since the Restoration of our Independence. The Sixth Constitutional Government has continued to consolidate national readiness, diligently addressing outstanding issues. Later this year the People's Democratic Republic of Laos takes up the ASEAN Chairmanship with its central theme "Turning Vision into Reality for a Dynamic ASEAN Community." Timor-Leste is looking forward to participating in this process as soon as possible and making our valuable contribution as a youthful and dynamic member of the ASEAN family."**ENDS**



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