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## **Message from the Prime Minister, Rui Maria de Araújo, on World Water Day**

To all the people of Timor-Leste,

On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, we celebrate World Water Day, when the whole world celebrates the importance of water and also access to drinking water, so essential to every individual and to the lives of all people.

In 2017 the celebration of World Water Day will focus mainly on the importance of waste-water, aiming to draw everyone's attention to the fact that water is a key resource in our lives. It seeks to encourage the population to not waste the water that we have and to look for solutions to recycle waste-water, instead of throwing it away.

In Timor-Leste, the Government, together with its partners, continues to make efforts to increase access to water throughout the territory, in accordance with the 2030 Strategic Development Plan, and seeks to reduce the waste of the water of our ponds, streams and springs.

We have already made some progress, as shown by statistics: in 1999, only 53% of the population had access to safe drinking water; in 2015 this percentage was 72%. Although we have been able to increase the number of Timorese who have access to safe drinking water in rural areas, it still only reaches 65% of this population. The same is true in schools and some health posts and centres in rural areas, which do not yet have access to safe drinking water.

In urban areas, access to the supply of good drinking water has not yet reached 100% of the population and quality and reliability varies..

On the other hand, many water sources, such as rivers and ponds are polluted with garbage and cannot be used for drinking. When we do not take care of our environment, when we burn or cut trees, this causes a decrease in the number of plants and forests. And when rain comes, the soil becomes loose so that it doesn't retain the water, which is then taken more quickly to the sea. This hampers the use of water from springs, which will make it increasingly difficult for our children and grandchildren. We need to understand this and take action now.

We need to make efforts to manage well the waters from ponds, springs and streams. We need to take care of the forests and plants and to treat the waste water from our daily use, whose management is important not only for our health, but also to better take care of our environment.

In this respect, we can be proud of an important step that we have taken, to create, in Tibar, the first equipment to treat the waste-water from the city of Dili.



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Soon, the Government will review and approve the National Policy for the Management of Water Resources (i.e. the waters from streams, ponds and springs) and also the National Policy for Water Supply to the whole territory. These policies will be important guides to manage existing water and also to create conditions for the protection of plants and forests.

The Government undertakes to distribute safe drinking water throughout the territory, as well as to increase the proportion of waste-water that will be treated, and to increase the recycling of water, so it can be safely re-used.

These efforts are aimed at helping us to achieve Goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which sets out the need to strive for access and adequate management of water and sanitation for all.

We all, each Timorese and all the people, we have a responsibility to participate in taking measures to conserve and protect water in Timor-Leste.

No to the unrestrained cutting of trees!

No to deliberate burning of vegetation!

No to spoiling water! Close the taps, do not lose water easily!

Protect our ponds, streams and springs!

Plant Trees to secure the soil and water!

Recycle waste-water!

... Thus, we can ensure safe drinking water for all Timorese – today and tomorrow!

All for one and one for all!