



PRIME
MINISTER

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE,
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO,
AT THE SIGNING OF THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT AND ANNUAL
GRANT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE
AND THE TIMORESE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE**

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
16 June 2017**

Most Reverend Bishop of Baucau and President of the Timorese Episcopal Conference,
Basílio do Nascimento

Most Reverend Bishop of Dili, Virgílio do Carmo

Fellow Government Members

Your Excellency Monsignor Mario Codamo, Chargé d'Affaires at the Vatican Embassy in
Timor-Leste

Reverend Fathers and Reverend Mothers

Dear Directors-General, National Directors and Heads of Departments

Ladies and gentlemen,
Illustrious guests,

Following the ratification by Parliament in 2015 of the Agreement between the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Holy See, which I had the honour of presenting in person to Pope Francis during my official visit to the Vatican in 2016, it is with enormous satisfaction that I have signed today, on behalf of the Government, the Framework Agreement and Annual Grant Agreement between the Government of Timor-Leste and the Timorese Episcopal Conference, represented by its President, the Most Reverend Bishop Basílio do Nascimento.

This Framework Agreement sets in a clear manner the general rules that will govern the partnership between the State and the Catholic Church, namely identifying the areas of funding and respective distribution of monies. In view of the vital role played by the Catholic Church in our country in terms of education and the fight against poverty, which are key areas for boosting development and reducing inequalities and social exclusion, the present Agreement foresees that no less than 75% of the State contribution to the Episcopal Conference shall be channelled into activities in these areas, namely 50% for education activities, 25% for social activities and the remaining 25% for activities by the ecclesial government and for managing the monies allocated.

As such, this Framework Agreement is another vital step in terms of consolidating the relationship between our State and the Holy See, as it will act as the basis for all grant agreements that the Government will sign every year in the future with the Timorese Episcopal Conference. We have also signed the 2017 Annual Grant Agreement, which foresees funding through the State General Budget.

Ladies and gentlemen
Illustrious guests

The instruments now established, which are naturally important within the framework of formal relations between States and agencies, represent much more to the Timorese people. They are the acknowledgement of what the Catholic Church represents to society, its values and its beliefs, as well as the acknowledgement of the vital role the Catholic Church played during the struggle for the independence of Timor-Leste and our identity-building process. Thus the State found an essential partner in the Catholic Church, which to this day continues supporting us in the construction of a humanistic, fraternal and solidary society.

The Catholic Church, through the actions of the Reverend Fathers and Mothers, has an enormous importance to the people. It is often present in places where the State does not yet reach, providing essential basic services so that our people can live with dignity. Indeed, the Catholic Church is also involved in such vital areas as education and welfare. In many remote areas of our country, human development has only been possible thanks to the selfless intervention by the men and women of the Catholic Church. As such, it is only fair that the State acknowledges this support and enshrines it within a properly formalised institutional cooperation framework.

Ladies and gentlemen
Illustrious guests

Before concluding this brief address, I would like to seize this opportunity to convey my deep admiration and gratitude to the Reverend Fathers and Mothers (many of whom are in attendance here today), who work every day to give love and hope to the children, youngsters, men and women of this country. Whether in education, health, arts and crafts, agriculture or other economic activities, as well as in its most important mission of providing spiritual support, your support has been invaluable to much of the work and knowledge being developed in favour of our people's evolution from a social standpoint. Every passing day, this work and this legacy forge values of respect and solidarity within our society.

As the Sixth Constitutional Government nears the end of its mandate, I would like to thank the Catholic Church for its collaboration and support in the achievement of common goals of prosperity, justice, peace and harmony in Timor-Leste.

I believe that by acknowledging what we have done in the past, working hard in the present and continuing to work alongside the Catholic Church in the future we will succeed in giving our citizens the dignity and wellbeing to which they are entitled.

Thank you very much.

Dili, 16 June 2017

Dr Rui Maria de Araújo