



Voluntary National Review 2019 of Timor-Leste

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Key messages submitted to the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

01.

Timor-Leste's achievements as the newest country in Asia are underpinned by its commitment to reconciliation, inclusion and democracy. Emerging from Portuguese colonial administration and Indonesian occupation, the nation restored independence in 2002, amid a state of ruins where basic services and institutions were burnt to ashes. The country has made the journey from a traumatic independence struggle and period of civil unrest and conflict to become a democratic nation focused on state-building and accelerating progress on sustainable development.

02.

The country championed the 2030 Agenda from its inception, advocating for the standalone goal on peace, justice and strong institutions. An SDG Roadmap, produced in 2017, outlined how the global goals align with Timor-Leste's Strategic Development Plan (2011-2030). The nation's commitment to peace, inclusion and institution-building is the foundation for achieving all the SDGs. Timor-Leste recommits its leadership on SDG 16, working for peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

03.

Reconciliation and inclusion, within Timor-Leste and with its neighbour Indonesia, were immediate priorities. Social transfers to veterans and poor families were established early on, ensuring social cohesion and continued peace. However, women, rural communities, people and children with disabilities continue to face challenges accessing decent jobs and quality education and health care.

04.

The nation is consolidating a culture of democracy, undergoing four democratic and peaceful elections since regaining independence. The creation of independent human rights, anti-corruption and electoral institutions is important progress. Promoting decentralisation, building institutional capacity and strengthening the justice sector will help consolidate peace, promote the rule of law and enhance accountability.

05.

With one of the youngest populations in the world, and a nascent private sector, there are not enough jobs for the large number of young people entering the labour market. Seizing a potential demographic dividend will require investment in education, skills and the generation of decent jobs, but also a continued decline in fertility rates. Economic diversification and creating jobs in productive sectors, such as labour-intensive manufacturing, tourism and agriculture, will help grow the non-oil economy.

06.

The country has made important progress in health and education, critical for building human capital. Timor-Leste has reduced maternal and child mortality rates, is polio-free, and on track to eliminate malaria. While school attendance rates have increased markedly, with gender parity, access for children with disabilities remains low. In order to equip all young men and women for the labour market, investment is rapidly needed in quality secondary, vocational and higher education.

07.

Tackling high rates of child malnutrition and food insecurity and improving access to clean water and sanitation are vital and require sustained investment. While the number of stunted children (low height for age) is declining, it is still very high. Accelerating improvements in nutrition will make a huge difference to child learning outcomes and productivity. Progress in improving water and sanitation, a key driver of malnutrition, has been made, however more needs to be done to sustain and scale up these efforts.

08.

The country has made progress in women's representation in the National Parliament and in decision-making positions related to peace and security. However, greater attention is needed to tackle high rates of gender-based violence and enhance women's economic empowerment. Improving access to justice and promoting greater access to land for women will help increase progress on all the SDGs.

09.

Timor-Leste is saving the proceeds of its natural oil and gas resources for future generations through its sovereign wealth Petroleum Fund. The nation used withdrawals from the fund to front-load infrastructure, provide electricity and rehabilitate the devastated road network. Ensuring future withdrawals are used to invest strategically in the drivers of growth – such as human capital and economic diversification – will help reduce dependence on oil.

10.

As a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), climate-proofing investments and promoting climate adaptation are crucial for environmental sustainability and resilience. Timor-Leste believes global action to combat climate change is required, supporting the leadership shown by SIDS in renewable energy.

11.

At this critical state-building phase, it is vital to make the most of partnerships and carefully leverage domestic and international resources to finance sustainable development. With low levels of public revenue, and overseas development assistance declining, new forms of financing, technology, south-south cooperation and technical support are required.