

The Secretary of State for the Council of Ministers and Official Spokesperson for the Government of Timor-Leste Ágio Pereira



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Fighting corruption should be a multi-partisan endeavor

“The use of the word ‘corruption’ has become a political weapon” said the Secretary of State Ágio Pereira, “so while fighting corruption should be a multi-party and national endeavor; it has instead become a political vice volleyed carelessly without supporting facts or due diligence to ensure the integrity of claims.”

‘Meanwhile the reputations of many have been damaged without any judicial due process as guaranteed by the Constitution and so the reputation of the nation, not to mention the some 24,000 members of the Government and civil service, has been tarnished both domestically and internationally.’

‘The time has come to collectively identify the weaknesses in our nascent institutions and to systematically address the deficiencies. We need to allow the reform and education processes implemented by the Xanana Gusmão Government to manifest. Building confidence in our state will not happen as long as accusations of corruption are used as a politically motivated device of self interest.’

Pereira deemed the recent statements made in the press labeling ‘The Xanana Government as corrupt’ as irresponsible and opportunistic, a very poor and inept approach to governance.

“It seems it is much easier to make blanket statements than to do the due diligence to explore the facts,” added Pereira, “this level of irresponsibility needs to cease.”

Pereira used the example of recent allegations against the Ministry of Finance, accused of ‘losing’ money. “The Ministry of Finance does not make cash payments for projects. Treasury is responsible for processing payment requests received from line ministries that are based on appropriations approved by the Parliament. On the approval of the payment request, the Banking and Payment Authority (BPA) is advised to credit the payee’ account in a commercial bank. The BPA, Treasury and the concerned line ministries would have a record of transactions.’

‘There are several layers of checks and balances for payments to be received, processed and executed all of which can be investigated if the need arises.’

Pereira also noted that whether corruption can be a bi-product of weaknesses within relatively nascent institutions, simple negligence in systems, or a purposeful act by a person or group for monetary gain are all issues that are being addressed with a vigilant level of established reforms and mechanisms by the Xanana Gusmão Government.

New measures for greater accountability have been taken by creating two new oversight entities for procurement; a Technical Secretariat charged with oversight and a Commission to be established with members of the civil society to directly oversee procurement processes.

Additionally new technology to be implemented by FreeBalance will produce two information portals for the public, **Transparency Portal** where the public can access real time information on how the state funds are being executed and a **Procurement Portal** which also can be monitored by the public; disclosing how the procurement process was

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implemented, which procurement method was utilized according to the procurement laws of Timor-Leste, the process of evaluation, the names of companies and bidders and the amount allocated to the successful bidder in the tender process.

The Anti Corruption Commission has begun its' mandate and **The Civil Service Commission** is fully operational; all important measures to safeguard the state against corruption. Reforms to improve operations, systems, procedures and logistics have continued across Government.

Pereira closed by saying, "Corruption allegations based on speculation, perception, hearsay, rumour, sensationalism and untested information is poor politicking, to say the least; and the promotion of such allegations, motivated by political self interest, is a damaging and deliberate misuse of national trust. It can amount to abuse of power in itself. Political maturity is the first step in fighting corruption; let Timor-Leste be the example of best practice in a developing nation to stop acts of corruption through national participation but let's not destroy our own prospects for national development for short term political gains." **ENDS**

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