



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



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Exploring Justice Sector cooperation with the Northern Territory

This week members of the Government of Timor-Leste visited the Northern Territory to discuss cooperation in the justice sector. Minister of State and of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Agio Pereira, Minister of State, Coordinator of State Administration Affairs and Justice, and Minister of State Administration, Dionísio Babo Soares, and Ambassador for the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste in Australia, Abel Guterres, participated in constructive meetings held in Darwin.

On Tuesday the delegation met with Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, the Hon Adam Giles MLA, and discussed how to expand engagement between the vast northern region of Australia and Timor-Leste. The Chief Minister has visited Díli several times since assuming office in 2013 and places a high value on regional cooperation. He is a supporter of the Trilateral Zone for sub-regional development, which aims to promote economic cooperation between Indonesia, Australia and Timor-Leste, focusing particularly on opportunities within Kupang, Timor-Leste and the Northern Territory.

Attorney General and Minister for Justice of the Northern Territory, the Hon John Elferink MLA, met with the Ministers and Ambassador on Tuesday evening and amongst other things discussed innovations underway in the area of Correctional Services and avenues for cooperation with the Ministry of Justice of Timor-Leste.

The central meeting of the visit was a round table event on Wednesday morning held in Parliament House where participants gave an overview of the justice sector in their respective countries and considered options for ongoing cooperation. Minister Dionísio Babo Soares outlined the current status of Timor-Leste's judicial sector with Minister of State Agio Pereira discussing aspects of Customary Law and other areas that will be addressed in a process of reform and development in Timor-Leste.

On the Australian side the meeting was chaired by Mr. Duncan McConnel, President of the Law Council of Australia and member of the Northern Territory Bar Association with contributions from Supreme Court Judge Justice Jenny Blokland, Chief Stipendiary Magistrate Dr. John Lowndes, CEO of the Northern Territory Department of Attorney General, Greg Shanahan and Justice and Kellie Grainger of the Law



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Society of the Northern Territory.

The meeting noted some of the common challenges faced by the Northern Territory and Timor-Leste including language issues and isolated areas. There are some 100 language groups amongst the indigenous population of the Territory with many areas not easily accessible for judicial services. Other themes covered included specialized jurisdictions, rehabilitation of offenders and the challenge of balancing the independence and accountability of judicial actors.

Minister of State and Spokesperson for the Sixth Constitutional Government Agio Pereira noted “the meetings this week have set a good foundation for ongoing cooperation with the Government and judicial sector of our near neighbors in the Northern Territory. We have further meetings planned and activated a number of processes for information exchange. Invitations have been extended for hosting judicial actors for skill sharing. The Government recognizes that in 13 years our justice sector has made good progress with extraordinary contributions by many involved. In the next two years we will work hard to support further development of a fair, impartial and accessible system that is appropriate in the context of Timor-Leste”**ENDS**



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