



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



**MEDIA
RELEASE**

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Prime Minister to meet with His Holiness Pope Francis and deliver signed and ratified Agreement to the Holy See

The Prime Minister, H.E. Dr. Rui Maria de Araújo, departs today, Tuesday the 1st of March, to Rome, Italy, on route to the Holy See, where he will meet with His Holiness Pope Francis. The main purpose of the visit is to personally deliver the historic, signed and ratified Agreement between the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Holy See.

This Agreement was first signed by Prime Minister Araújo and the Secretary of State for the Vatican and His Holiness Pope Francis' Legate, His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin in Dili, Timor-Leste, on the 14th of August 2015. Subsequently the agreement was ratified by the National Parliament of Timor-Leste on the 26th of October 2015 and published as Resolution of National Parliament No18/2015 on the 11th of November 2015.

The document to be delivered establishes the legal framework for the relations between the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Holy See, recognizing the importance of the historical and cultural role of the Catholic Church in Timor-Leste, noting the deep rootedness of the Catholic religion in Timorese Society and respecting the principles of religious freedom and separation of Church and State. The process leading to the exchange set to take place this Thursday the 3rd of March, began in 2006 with the creation of a commission to begin discussion on the terms of the agreement.

This Agreement defines and guarantees the legal status of the Catholic Church and regulates various areas, including canonical marriage, places of worship, Catholic institutions of education and training, the teaching of religion in schools, the Church's charitable activities, pastoral care in the armed forces and in penal institutions and hospitals, and the patrimonial and fiscal system.

His Eminence Cardinal Parolin said last year that the Agreement was "an important step on the journey that the Catholic Church and the people of Timor-Leste have undertaken together for five hundred years. This unique relationship, which is highly valued by the Holy See, is enshrined and clearly affirmed also in the Constitution of Timor-Leste."

The Prime Minister is accompanied on this trip by the Vice President of National Parliament, H.E. Adérito



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Hugo da Costa and the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation H.E. Roberto Sarmento de Oliveira Soares. A number of bilateral and working meetings are scheduled. The Prime Minister will also meet with members of the Timorese Community.

Spokesperson for the Sixth Constitutional Government, Minister of State Ágio Pereira said “the Prime Minister’s personal delivery of the signed and ratified Agreement to the Holy See and his meeting with His Holiness Pope Francis is an appropriate way to complete the long process taken to develop and finalize this important Agreement. His trip acknowledges the central role of the Church in our society, our history and our liberation, and gives expression to our deep and affectionate relationship with the Vatican.”

The Prime Minister and delegation will return to Dili on Tuesday the 8th of March. **ENDS**



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