



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



**MEDIA
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Government ensures increased use of Tetum in the Justice Sector

The Government, following through on its Program, is supporting the increased use of Tetum in the Justice Sector. On the 17th of January the Council of Ministers approved a decree on The Use of Official Languages in the Justice Sector requiring the use of Timor-Leste's two official languages, Tetum and Portuguese.

Bilingual procedures are going to be prioritized in areas where citizens interact with the Justice sector on a regular basis including registry and notary services, land and property, the Public Defenders Office and the Police. The decree says "everyone has the right to speak in an official language, either orally or in writing, to any body or department of the justice sector and to receive a reply in the official language of their choice."

The Sixth Constitutional Government's Program commits to giving particular attention to "creating measures that make the legal system truly bilingual" and working to ensure "full and equal use of both languages." By acting on this commitment the Government assists Timor-Leste in making progress towards targets within Sustainable Development Goal 16 which include promoting "the rule of law" and ensuring "equal access to justice for all".

Measures set out in the decree include the bilingual publication of laws, the provision of qualified and competent translation and interpretation services for the courts and other judicial bodies and the adoption of bilingual procedures within the public services of justice. New laws are to be published in both languages and existing laws will be translated so that they are available in Tetum. The implementation of the decree will benefit citizens, police, prosecutors, investigators, advocates and other judicial actors.

The decree recognizes that to ensure accuracy there will need to be a development of legal vocabulary within Tetum, a process it says "should be encouraged" and which is to be promoted and guided by the *Special Council for the Development of Legal Tetum* established by the legislation.

Spokesperson, Minister of State Agio Pereira, noted "this newly approved decree is a landmark in our judicial development. It most significant because it creates the tools, structures and budgeting processes needed to turn our aim of equal use of our two official languages in the justice sector into reality". **ENDS**



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