

PRESS RELEASE



Timor-Leste

For Immediate Release

Portugal pledges \$1.2 million to strengthen the Justice System

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The Portuguese Charge d'Affaires, Dra. Isabel Brilhante Pedrosa and Special Representative of the Secretary General for Timor-Leste and UNDP Resident Representative, Dr. Sukehiro Hasegawa will meet today at the Judicial Training Centre in Caicoli, at 10.30, for a signing ceremony committing a \$1.2 million donation from the Government of Portugal to the Justice System Project.

The project is a joint effort by the Council of Coordination, comprised by the Minister of Justice, the Chief Justice and Prosecutor General, and UNDP. It aims to strengthen the institutions of the courts, the prosecution service, the public defenders office, the prisons service, the Judicial Training Centre, as well as improving the capacity of the Ministry of Justice to formulate justice policy and provide administrative support to the other justice system institutions.

In particular, Portugal stresses the importance of UNDP's and the Government efforts in the area of training for the legal professions. The Justice System project has recently supported the Council of Coordination in establishing the Judicial Training Centre, which is the institution tasked with providing *standardized, compulsory, post-graduate, professional* training of lawyers as a condition for appointment to the important positions of judges, prosecutors and public defenders. It ensures uniform standards and quality control.

"Portugal is very happy to continue supporting the further development of the judicial system. This contribution, delivered through the UNDP justice project, has the overall aim to improve the institutional capacity of the Judicial Training Center and will support its training related activities. Portugal welcomes the coordinated and serious training program for those already employed in the sector as well as for those who wish to enter the sector. The training initiative that is being implemented is in our view a major step in the strengthening the effectiveness, equity and efficiency of the justice sector" said Charge d'Affaires, Dra Isabel Brilhante Pedrosa

Portugal has an ongoing cooperation program for the justice sector since 2000 which has focused mainly on capacity building of judicial institutions, training of court actors (namely judges, prosecutors) and drafting of legislation. Portugal's commitment to Timor-Leste is underlined by our

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multi year pledge of assistance worth of 27 million euros for 2004 (about 30 million USD), being justice one of the key sectors for Portuguese assistance.

Mr Hasegawa welcomed the donation.

“An independent and professional justice system is crucial to guarantee the constitutional separation of powers, uphold the rule of law, and to provide the people of Timor-Leste with access to justice.” said Mr Sukehiro Hasegawa, UNDP’s Resident Representative. “It is a foundation of democratic governance which safeguards human rights of all people living in this country. I thank the Government of Portugal for making such a valuable contribution to the UNDP project ” Strengthening the Justice System in Timor-Leste”.

The Justice System Project is supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with funding from Portugal, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Ireland, and Australia.

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