



**JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME  
PROGRAMA DE MONITORIZAÇÃO DO SISTEMA JUDICIAL**

**Press Release**

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**NATIONAL PARLIAMENT APPROVES LAW ON PRIVATE LAWYERS**

On Tuesday (10/6) the National Parliament convened a plenary session and approved Law No. 2/II/1 on the Regulatory Framework for Private Lawyers and Lawyer Training. The plenary session was attended by 47 of the 65 members of parliament. At the start of the session the speaker gave an opportunity to the Chairperson of Committee A, Fernanda Borges, to express her opinion about the responsibility entrusted to her commission by the national parliament to draft the law on private lawyers.

The chairperson of Committee A said that the advocates law had been discussed in detail by Committee A, however the committee wanted to ask the plenary session to scrutinize certain articles that may require modification. Borges explained that even though Committee A was the sole committee responsible for drafting this law, it had been well prepared because those involved in its discussion were all legal experts.

The law was voted on at 3.45pm and of the 47 members present in the plenary session, 44 voted in favor and 3 abstained. The number of voting members present was sufficient to form a majority in favor of the law. Therefore Law No. 2/II/1 on the Regulatory Framework for Private Lawyers and Lawyer Training was formally approved.

After voting, each member of parliament gave reasons why he/she voted in favor or abstained. The majority of those who voted in favor said they approve of this law because it is important for private lawyers. The enactment of this law will enable private lawyers to carry out their duties efficiently and legitimately when applying the laws of this country. The abstaining members said that they chose to abstain because they didn't really have a sound understanding of the contents of this law and they only received a copy of the draft law at the last moment. Nevertheless all members of parliament are entitled and obliged to provide explanations to the community, especially in relation to the contents of the law on private lawyers.

This law on private lawyers will be submitted to the President within 30 days for enactment and promulgation in the state gazette so it can enter into force in Timor Leste.

Private lawyers are delighted at the approval of this law because it provides a legal basis for them to carry out their duties both inside and outside of the courts to assist members of the community seeking advocacy, and to enable them to specifically contribute to the development of a strong and robust legal system in Timor Leste based on the rule of law.

JSMP has observed that the National Parliament worked hard and was very committed to finalizing this important law. JSMP considers this effort as a major step and vital contribution to the legal system. JSMP is certain that the National Parliament will continue to work hard to finalize several other draft laws through a process of consultation and approval to ensure that they produce laws that benefit the citizens of Timor Leste.

Private lawyers in Timor Leste have long anticipated and demanded this law. We all hope that the enactment of this law will prevent individuals from practicing law in Timor Leste without proper authorization in recognition of the fact that lawyers are members of an honorable profession. Therefore this law must safeguard their existence and their profession so that they can provide legal services to those seeking justice through the formal system in all courts across Timor Leste.

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