



JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME
PROGRAMA DE MONITORIZAÇÃO DO SISTEMA JUDICIAL

PRESS RELEASE

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THIRD ANNUAL AATL CONFERENCE HELD IN DILI

The third annual AATL conference was held in the Dili Memorial Hall, on 28 September 2006, with the assistance of Advocat San Frontieres (ASF).

The conference was held to review the performance of the AATL executive as well as its members who have been involved in developing the AATL into a competent forum for bringing together the lawyers of Timor Leste.

During the conference the AATL president Benevides C Barros stated that in principle the AATL has not been able to establish itself as a fully independent body as it is heavily reliant on ASF to help it carry out its programs. This is because the AATL has not received recognition and support from the government. The AATL has worked hard to develop the capacity of its members by organizing a wide range of activities including workshops, trainings etc. Benevides added that, with the full support of ASF, the AATL has conducted several training activities for its members. The training sessions were attended by international lawyers from the International Bar Association (IBA), the Philippines Bar Association (PBA) as well as international prosecutors from the Judicial Training Centre in Dili.

During the conference AATL members questioned the transparency of the AATL executive and ASF donors in the management of existing funds and questioned why it was so difficult for ASF donors to meet (exchange ideas) with the AATL executive.

JSMP believes that there are three main issues that need to be addressed by the AATL:

- The need to improve legal advocacy so that the statute, code of ethics and license to practice for AATL members are not questioned during the provision of advocacy to clients.
- The need for the executive and AATL members to work in accordance with the institution they represent. This is because there has been a lack of coordination between executive and members of AATL. Consequently, there has been a negative perception by the staff members of the executive and donor (ASF) in respect of financial management.
- The need to organize training to develop the capacity of all members of the AATL.

JSMP believes that another crucial issue is the need for the AATL executive to be proactive when negotiating with the Government (Ministry of Justice) and the National Parliament to advance the draft Statute on Advocates which is currently with Commission A of the National Parliament. JSMP believes that if Timor Leste was to have its own Statute on Advocates then the professional legitimacy, credibility and accountability of Timorese advocates will be guaranteed. JSMP hopes that the plans set in place will be executed successfully to meet current expectations and increase the prestige of the AATL on a national and international level.