



JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME
PROGRAMA DE MONITORIZAÇÃO DO SISTEMA JUDICIAL

Press Release

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**National Parliament expresses its appreciation regarding the JSMP
National Seminar on Democracy and Public Participation in the Law
Making Process**

In a plenary session held on 25 February 2014 the National Parliament expressed its appreciation for the National Seminar organized by the Judicial System Monitoring Programme(JSMP) on democracy and public participation in the law making process.

President of the CNRT Bench, Natalino dos Santos, made a statement in the plenary session that the national seminar organized by JSMP was excellent and important because it brought together Village Chiefs from Dili and representatives from several districts to discuss land disputes or land problems in their regions, sub-villages and villages. Therefore, he requested for the Chair of the Parliament to promptly consider this problem and to start discussing the package of draft land laws.

“JSMP was very happy to hear the expression of appreciation from the National Parliament, because the parliament stated that the national seminar organized by JSMP was beneficial for the National Parliament and the community. Nevertheless, JSMP encourages the National Parliament to consider the public’s concerns that were raised during the seminar. In particular JSMP requests for the National Parliament to use its constitutional authority to urge the government to respond to the concerns raised by the local leaders during the seminar,” said Luis de Oliveira Sampaio, the Executive Director of JSMP.

Previously on 20 February 2014 JSMP conducted a National Seminar on Democracy and Public Participation in the Law Making Process, in Delta Nova, Comoro, Dili.

The national seminar was attended by local authorities from six districts, namely Baucau, Same, Ainaro, Ermera, Liquica and Dili, who raised discussed current issues, for example: oversight activities that have not reached the remote areas, amendment of the Law on Pensions for former state officials, placing the draft Law on Reparations and a Public Memorial Institution back on the agenda, infrastructure issues (access to main roads), poor quality projects, education (school books) and access to health services (including suggestions to build maternity centers in remote areas that are a long way from Health Centers).

In addition, almost all of the participants expressed concern about land disputes happening in the community and requested for the National Parliament to accelerate the discussion of a draft land law. Considering the importance of this law, it was suggested for National Parliament to hold a lengthy and detailed public discussion to ensure that this law reflects the social and cultural realities that exist in Timor-Leste. They expressed concern because previously the government held a consultation with village chiefs, but the forum was well and truly beyond the capacity of the village chiefs to participate because the draft law was distributed electronically in the form of a CD.

Other participants expressed regret about the policy on the use of State finances, because each year the government spends billions of dollars, but they don't see any results from the money spent by the State. Poor road conditions are experienced in almost all regions, and all projects lack proper planning and coordination between the relevant ministries.

In the question and answer session the representatives of the National Parliament, namely the Vice President of the National Parliament and the President of Committee A, provided very productive responses. They emphasized that they will consider the issues and concerns, and they promised to follow up in accordance with their authority and to convey these issues to the competent government departments to seek solutions.

In addition, the speaker from the National University of Timor-Leste (UNTL) tried to act as a bridge to facilitate communication between the members of parliament and the participants by utilizing a theoretical approach and explaining the structural obstacles that often impede public participation in this process. JSMP presented developments and obstacles faced by the National Parliament.

JSMP hopes that this mechanism can further the public interest by engaging the people's representatives, and also hopes that this activity will continue in the future with the participation of members of parliament and village chiefs.

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