



Press Release
25 February 2022
National Parliament

Using Portuguese to evaluate the capacity of candidates for the position of President of the Republic is unfair and creates a barrier for those citizens who don't understand Portuguese to compete in the election of the President of the Republic

The National Electoral Commission (CNE) has issued a rule that candidates for the position of President of the Republic need to answer questions in Portuguese. The aim is to evaluate the capacity of these candidates, because according to the President of the CNE, the provisions in Article 75 of the Constitution state that they need to have sufficient capacity to lead our country. According to the schedule, the candidates for the position of President of the Republic will be involved in a debate between 2-6 March 2022.

JSMP believes that the mechanism of using Portuguese that is being applied by the CNE to evaluate the capacity of the candidates for the position of the President of the Republic is incorrect, unfair and has created a barrier for those citizens that do not understand Portuguese to compete for the position of President of the Republic even though they have the capacity to exercise the functions and competencies of the President of the Republic as set out in the Constitution, said the Executive Director of JSMP, Ana Paula Marçal.

JSMP has noted that Timor-Leste has two official languages, namely Tetum and Portuguese, based on the provisions set out in subsection 1) of Article 13 in the Timor-Leste Constitution. Therefore, it is important that the candidates competing for the position of President of the Republic need to understand one of these two languages. If they understand both of these languages, then that is even better.

In reality Heads of State from many nations around the world when making an official visit to another country, including the United Nations, always use their official language that they understand, and this is interpreted into international languages. The capacity to act as the President of the Republic should not be based on linguistic capacity alone. Even if a citizen understands Portuguese or one of the

international languages perfectly, this does not mean that he or she has the capacity to become President of the Republic.

Also, most of the population only understand the official language of Tetum, and if Portuguese is used how will they be able to follow this debate properly and assess the capacity of the candidates competing for the position of President of the Republic. This will have an impact on their choices in the upcoming election. Therefore, JSMP recommends for CNE to withdraw this rule and allow the candidates to freely choose and use one of the official languages that they wish in the debate.

For more information, please contact:

Ana Paula Marçal
Executive Director of JSMP
Telephone: 3323883
www.jsmp.tl