



Press Release
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JSMP requests for Committee A of the National Parliament to improve the mechanism for public consultations in the future

On Thursday 26 November 2020 Committee A of the National Parliament held a public consultation in Ermera Municipality about the Draft Law on Local Power and Administrative Decentralisation and the Municipal Elections Law. This consultation was attended by the deputy administrator of Ermera Municipality and the municipal directors, village chiefs, representative of religious denominations, representatives of political parties, veterans, NGOs and women's groups.

President of Committee A, His Excellency MP Joaquim dos Santos, during this meeting said that the aim of the consultation was to hear the concerns of local authorities and relevant entities about these two draft laws. He also provided a summary of questions regarding the importance of these two laws to the local authorities, including the advantages and disadvantages, rights and responsibilities, composition of the assemblies and competencies. In relation to the Municipal Elections Law, the President of Committee A asked for comments about the electoral system, requirements to compete for positions in the municipal assembly, the authority president and electoral organisations. The participants only received copies of these two draft laws during the consultation.

“JSMP requests for Committee A of the National Parliament to improve the mechanism for public consultations by preparing a written summary of issues to be discussed in Tetum that should be distributed beforehand to enable the participants to fully participate in the discussion, and this will make the consultation more effective and will achieve better outcomes to contribute to the production of laws that reflect the realities, interests and aspirations of many people,” said the Executive Director of JSMP, Ms. Ana Paula Marçal.

The participants in this consultation were disappointed because Committee A only distributed the two draft laws during the consultation, therefore it was very difficult for them to provide comments, and the two draft laws were written in Portuguese which made it even more difficult. Therefore, the participants only made recommendations and did not provide many comments and they said they would submit their recommendations in writing.

During the consultation the participants conveyed their concerns about the central Government distributing funds to the local Government, the criteria for applying to the Municipal Assembly that should be free of discrimination, especially against representatives of veterans and independent candidates, the criteria for applying to the position of Authority President should include requirements that the person is of good character and credible. Some participants asked

for representatives of veterans to only be on the consultative council, and asked about the rights and responsibilities of members of the Municipal Assembly in comparison with members of the National Parliament, and said that this issue should be given careful consideration.

In relation to these issues, the members of parliament did not respond, but provided general commentary only, that they noted these concerns and will consider them in relation to the discussion of these two laws, and they consider these two laws to be important for Timor-Leste , therefore the representatives of MPs from the benches who are part of Committee A, namely the political parties of CNRT, Fretilin, PLP and KHUNTO, promised to provide their full support to finalise the discussion of these two laws during their mandate.

JSMP noted that Committee A only distributed these two laws when discussion started during the public consultation and these two laws were in Portuguese. All of the village chiefs from Atsabe Administrative Post did not participate in this public consultation because they received a visit from the President of the National Parliament.

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