



Press Release
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National Parliament

JSMP urges the National Parliament to allocate sufficient funds to support the work of the Anti-Corruption Commission

The National Parliament (PN) through a plenary meeting on Monday 17 May 2021, has urged the Anti-Corruption Commission (CAC) to show its policing nature and capacity through actions to prevent and combat crimes of corruption in Timor-Leste. These statements and declarations were made when the annual 2020 CAC report was presented in the National Parliament.

During the session for questions and answers the members of parliament expressed their concerns and criticisms of actions taken by the CAC which have not demonstrated any significant progress even though this institution has been functioning or in existence for a decade. The members of parliament presented certain facts such as a monitoring report from the Chamber of Commerce Court, report from the Public Service Commission and also cases involving large funds such as the Hera Port, additional project for Comoro Bridge I, where the procedures did not follow the procurement regime, where there are strong indications regarding the crime of corruption, however the national parliament did not find these matters in the CAC report.

“JSMP appreciates the critical observations made by members of parliament to the CAC because one of the roles of the National Parliament is to oversee the work of the Government, including public institutions like the CAC. This criticism can help the CAC to work more effectively to prevent and combat corruption in Timor-Leste,” said the Executive Director of JSMP, Ana Paula Marçal.

However, as JSMP previously stated in a public consultation regarding the 5 year CAC Strategic Development for 2021-2025, in October 2020, in addition to other important issues, JSMP also urged the National Parliament to guarantee adequate financial resources, human resources and facilities, including security for the CAC to deal with the situations that the CAC has faced to date. JSMP believes that the CAC will work better when there is political support and full support from all levels of society. JSMP also believes that the support and political good will of the Parliament should not just be “political rhetoric” but should take the form of concrete political action by allocating sufficient funds to the CAC so it can function and implement its annual action plans.

Members of parliament emphasised that the CAC needs to be brave and take concrete actions and work intensively to combat crimes of corruption because

the CAC receives a high level of political and moral support from the National Parliament. This support was evident when there was an election of the CAC commissioner for the third mandate when 42 MPs voted to select the current commissioner from a total of 57 MPs who were present.

In addition to concerns and criticism regarding the productivity and actions of CAC, the members of parliament also thoroughly questioned the results of CAC monitoring of the Covid-19 budget which introduced a family allowance, a drivers' allowance, and the food basket program, where there were strong indications of corruption.

Moreover, members of parliament mentioned a money laundering network that operates in Timor-Leste, and criminal networks relating to the rent of State housing and land which was previously declared to the public by the Ministry of Justice.

When presenting the 2020 annual report, the CAC Commissioner told the PN that in 2020, even though there were restrictions regarding the rules and protocols for iha Covid-19 prevention and the uncertainty regarding the national political situation, the CAC continued to function despite facing a range of limitations.

This report described a total of 73 cases investigated by the CAC during 2020. From these cases, 56 were delegated to the Public Prosecution Service and 17 cases are still being investigated from 2019 and have not yet been finalised. Most of these cases involve abuse of power, embezzlement, economic participation in business, intentional mismanagement, passive corruption for an unlawful act, and misappropriation of public assets and forgery. From the cases investigated by the CAC, it managed to identify potential losses to the State totaling \$115,588. 58.

In relation to prevention work, the CAC commissioner spoke about the drafting of a national anti-corruption strategy, public awareness raising and the inspection and monitoring of the family allowance and food basket programs.

The report stated that inspection and monitoring activities of the food basket program saved the State \$385,400.00 from beneficiaries who did not meet eligibility in accordance with the law. This report also mentioned the results of collaboration between monitoring institutions such as the Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights and Justice (PDHJ), the Inspectorate General

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(IJE), the Public Service Commission (KFP), JSMP, FONGTIL, and university students together with youths and activist/volunteers from AJAR.

This presentation also highlighted the challenges faced by the CAC when implementing its annual programs, such as 1) a lack of political stability which impacted on efforts to prevent and combat corruption, 2) the COVID-19 pandemic which increased the risk of corruption, 3) limited financial resources and work facilities.

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