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The President of the National Parliament who was elected for the Fourth Legislature promises to give top priority to the productivity of the National Parliament during his mandate

On 5 September 2017 the National Parliament, through a meeting of the plenary, opened the fourth legislature and elected a new president of the National Parliament. The plenary voted on two candidates, namely Aniceto Guterres, representing the coalition of Fretilin, PD and KHUNTO, and Aderito Hugo da Costa, representing the opposition parties CNRT and PLP. As a result of this vote Aniceto Guterres was elected as the new president with 33 votes in favour and the other candidate received 32 votes from the 65 members of parliament.

In his speech the elected president Aniceto Guterres promised that he will be a president who represents the entire parliament, and will not discriminate against any political party or organisation, and he will continue to maintain dialogue to resolve any problems that emerge, and he will make the National Parliament into a body that truly represents all citizens across Timor-Leste.

He added that as the President of the National Parliament he will seek way to improve the productivity of the Parliament, and in particular he will guarantee that the plenary sessions run effectively to ensure that the Parliament functions normally and productively. Also, he stated that he would give priority to important laws that have passed their date of expiry or will reinstate the discussion of these laws and improve communication and establish a better relationship between the National Parliament and the community and hear the voice of the community.

“JSMP congratulates the elected president and the members of the chair who were sworn in and hopes that these new leaders who have become accustomed to the work of the parliament for 10 years will further improve the quality and productivity of the parliament and will be open to all people so they can participate actively in the legislation process in the National Parliament”, said the Executive Director of JSMP, Luis de Oliveira Sampaio.

JSMP is happy that the elected President of the National Parliament has promised to work with all relevant entities, including civil society and the media, to contribute to the legislative process in the National Parliament.

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JSMP requests for members of parliament in the fourth legislature to not repeat irregular practices such as failing to work in accordance with standard working hours, or holding individual conversations during plenary sessions and moving around during discussions in the plenary and during voting, which have regularly occurred in the National Parliament. Practices such as these lower the dignity of the National Parliament as the organ of sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of East Timor that represents all Timorese citizens and is vested with legislative supervisory and political decision making powers pursuant to Article 92 of the Timor-Leste Constitution. The National Parliament needs to be an organ of sovereignty that is dignified to provide a good example as a political and supervisory body that represents the interests of all East Timorese citizens.

JSMP also requests for the new members of parliament and the chair to give priority to the establishment of a national legislative plan during their mandate, in order to help them make laws in accordance with the existing plans and priorities. In addition, JSMP also requests for the parliament to reinitiate important draft laws that have passed their date of expiry and to coordinate with the Government so that important draft laws can be resubmitted to the National Parliament or so they can be reinitiated when they fall within the competence of the parliament, so that the parliament can discuss and approve the laws that are before the legislature. These laws are the draft Law Against Corruption, Draft Law on Child Protection, Draft Law on a Bar Association, and other important laws that were not approved during the mandate of the third legislature of the National Parliament.

In addition, on Wednesday 6 September 2017 JSMP observed that the members of parliament continued with an extraordinary plenary to vote on the structure of the chair, comprising two Vice Presidents and Secretary. The elected members of parliament were the first Vice President Júlio Sarmiento da Costa (PD) and the second Vice President António Verdial de Sousa (KHUNTO) and secretary of the chair Lídia Norberta dos Santos Martins (FRETILIN) with deputies Angélica da Costa (FRETILIN) and Elvina Sousa Carvalho (PD).

This single voting option resulted in 47 votes for, 8 against, and 10 abstaining from a total of 65 members of parliament.

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