Timor-Leste's Council of Ministers Approve Initial CEDAW State Report.

11th January 2008.

For immediate release.

The implementation of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ratified by the government of Timor-Leste in December of 2002, received a significant gain on Wednesday, 9th January 2008, when the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste's Council of Ministers approved the initial state report covering the period of 20th May 2002 through 19th May 2006.

UNIFEM's CEDAW – South East Asia Programme (SEAP) coordinator, Repelita Tambunan, on behalf of Timor-Leste's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI), presented the report to gathered Timor-Leste ministers, balancing the government's progress with areas in need of improvement towards women's realisation of equal rights in Timor-Leste, as stated in CEDAW.

Comprised of the Common Core Document (CCD), in which the general status of women across the country is highlighted, and the specific CEDAW report, focusing on women's human rights incorporating government initiatives pertaining to women in the political and public life; gender-based violence; cultural roles and stereotyping; trafficking and prostitution; equality in education and employment; access to health care services; economic and social benefits; rural women; and equality for women before the law, the process will now see the initial CEDAW state report submitted to the CEDAW committee for review, before being formally presented to the committee by the government of Timor-Leste. The CEDAW committee will determine the date of this presentation later this year.

UNIFEM CEDAW-SEAP's support to civil society, also, has made significant advancements in the final component of the CEDAW reporting process which will see designated members of Timor-Leste's NGO community prepare their Shadow Report, to be presented sometime in 2008. The Shadow Report serves as an assessment, from civil society, of the situation of women in Timor-Leste against the government's commitment to CEDAW. Additionally, it aims to strengthen the capacity of rights holders, such as civil society, to further promote human rights under CEDAW.

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The approval of the initial CEDAW state report on Wednesday was the first step in realising Timor-Leste's obligation to CEDAW, post ratification. The report represents a baseline for the basic human rights of women across the country that the government has committed to address and periodically review. UNIFEM's support to the government of Timor-Leste over the past two years in promoting implementation of CEDAW in the country and the preparation of the report will be continued as they work, with the government, towards the presentation of the report to the CEDAW committee.

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality. Placing the advancement of women's human rights at the centre of all of its efforts, UNIFEM focuses its activities on four strategic areas:

1. Reducing feminized poverty;
2. Ending violence against women;
3. Reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls;
4. Achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war.

The CEDAW-South East Asia Programme (CEDAW-SEAP) is a programme of UNIFEM, supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The project goal is to achieve more effective CEDAW implementation so that it better contributes to the realisation of women's human rights.

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