



Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste  
Ministry of State Administration and Territorial Management

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*Dili, 19 February 2009*

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Council of Ministers Approves Law Proposals on Local Governance**

The Council of Ministers agreed yesterday (18/2), after a long discussion, to submit law proposals on the establishment of local government to the National Parliament. The Council of Ministers had already approved last week a law proposal on Administrative and Territorial Division and yesterday approved two more law proposals on Local Government and Municipal Elections. Together, these three law proposals are an important step in the decentralization process and establishment of municipalities.

“The Government is firmly committed to decentralization and establishing a local government system. If these law proposals are approved by the National Parliament, they will become the legal framework for realizing our constitutional mandate for power at the local level,” said the Minister of State Administration and Territorial Management, Dr. Arcângelo Leite.

“We are preparing to implement decentralization reforms in 2009, depending on the decision from Parliament,” said Minister Leite, “Decentralization of government functions will not only make service delivery more effective, but also increase participation of all people in government work.”

The proposed local government structure would establish Municipalities at the district level, maintaining the existing district boundaries. According to the law proposals submitted to National Parliament, municipalities would have two bodies: a municipal assembly and municipal administration. Initially, municipal funds will come from the central government, but the municipal budget is allocated by the municipal assembly and executed by the mayor, who is responsible for the municipal administration. Assembly members and the mayor will be directly elected by voting held in each district.

These three law proposals were prepared by the Ministry of State Administration and Territorial Management (MSATM) in consultation with relevant line ministries, local authorities and civil society. In November 2008, MSATM held consultations on the draft law proposals with local officials and authorities in the 13 districts. In December 2008, the Ministry met with representatives from the media to explain about decentralization and the law proposals. In January 2008, MSATM also held an additional meeting for NGOs led by the NGO Forum. Feedback from this consultation process was considered when the Ministry revised the draft law proposals before submission to the Council of Ministers.

In addition to these three law proposals, the Government also prepared a Decentralization Strategic Framework, which is a plan and schedule for the process of establishing municipalities. This plan includes how to hold elections for the assembly members and the mayor, necessary training and capacity building for elected members and administrative positions within the municipality, and also plans for how to begin transferring services from the central government to local government.

MSATM took the lead in developing the law proposals based on the policy guidelines which were approved by the Council of Ministers in March of 2008. The National Parliament will make the final decision on how to establish a local governance system in Timor-Leste.

ENDS.

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