

**REPUBLIC DEMOCRATIC OF TIMOR-LESTE**

**AT THE**

**AD HOC OPEN-ENDED EXPERT GROUP ON MARINE LITTER AND MICROPLASTICS THIRD  
MEETING**

**Bangkok, 18–22 November 2019**

**MADAM CHAIR AND DISTINGUISHED DELEGATES,**

Timor-Leste has a various environmental problems, but today I would like to focus specifically on the implementation of Zero Plastic Policy in Timor-Leste as one manner to address the marine litter and micro plastics which has triggered international attention and has sparked interests from various companies to invest in the country.

Based on the study conducted by ADB, concludes that Dili City as a capital of Timor-Leste alone produces 120-150 tonnes of waste, and 21% is plastic waste. The plastic waste has become a serious environmental problems as it flows into the ocean which degrades the quality of the marine ecosystem, implicate to marine's biodiversity life and implicating to human health.

In July 2018, Timor-Leste, through the Secretary of State for Environment has announced its commitment to completely eliminate plastic from the natural environment by 2023 through the campaign of Zero Plastic Timor-Leste. The campaign has attracted interest from national through to international companies, as well as universities who have developed advanced technology to recycle plastic.

As the initial step, my office has developed a decree law for banning and impose fee for the importation of single-use plastic products to the country; and at the same time extensively raise awareness of the use of plastic for environment and health. Private sector have also been actively involved in bringing creative alternatives for plastic products specially for single-use plastic bags. Two local companies have imported 3 million cassava bags and are being sold at the local supermarkets as an alternative for plastic bags. Noticeably, many restaurants have drifted away from using plastic straws to stainless steel or paper straws, paper packaging, and containers made out of dried palm casks (bua kulit). Additionally, the Government has also issued ministerial diploma to abolish the use of plastic water bottles in all Government institutions and offices.

In May 2019, the Government, through my office have signed a MoU with the Mura Technology to implement a not for profit project called RESPECT which aims to recycle most of plastic waste

and turn it into oil. The technology used has been developed by Prof. Thomas Maschmeyer from Sydney University, Australia. In addition, my office witnessed the signing of the MoU between Mercy Corp and KOICA to recycle the plastic waste to bitumen, construction materials and asphalt. This project is largely funded by KOICA and partially by Heineken and Caltech. Timor-Leste very ambitious with its Zero Plastic targets to reach not only at a national level, but also regional level. We are currently planning and designing Arafura Plastic Neutral Region which we will propose to work collaboratively with Indonesia, Australia and PNG, and would like to invite New Zealand to join this initiative.

Earlier this year, my office also launched another campaign called “One Bag, One Tree” which gained the interest from Heineken and Caltech through a signing of an MoU. Heineken and Caltech have provided my office with 5000 re-usable bags which are then given to the supermarket in Dili to be sold. The revenue from these bags are then in turn used to subsidize the creation of nurseries by the villages who are the victims of the recent bushfires. This is the one of the initial steps towards the greening the country and prepare the communities for carbon offset market.

I have listed various initiatives and priorities for Timor-Leste, however, as a developing country, we are still facing serious implementation challenges. Timor-Leste adopts the principles of sustainable development and green economy and ratifies various environmental commitments because we understand that only through these commitments, we are able to make concrete changes and move forward sustainably. Mainstreaming of environmental concepts in the decision making level has also been one of the serious challenges, hence, often some decisions are not in full consideration of the damages to the environment. The VIII Constitutional Government is prioritizing the issues of environment and is actively involved in finding solutions and ways to protect and conserve the environment.

Timor-Leste understands that if no action will be taken both at national and international level, the use of plastic will continue to increase at an alarming rate and will cause serious damages to marine ecosystems, destruction of biodiversity and bring health related problems. We have seen from various photos circulating of The Great Pacific garbage patch which is marine debris that has formed an island ranging from the size of Texas to the size of Russia. The most recent research had also concluded that there is an estimate of 150 million tones of plastic in the ocean. In a business-as-usual scenario, the ocean will contain one tone of plastic for every three tones of fish by 2015. By 2050, the ocean will contain more plastic than fish, by weight.

Therefore, this meeting also serves as a great platform for all the countries to come together to share ideas, best-practices and lessons-learned on ways to shift to a greener development on how to reduce the use of plastic and its impact to marine. I hope that from this event, I will be able to take home some important actions that I can implement in Timor-Leste.

Thank you very much for your attention!

ON BEHALF OF SECRETARY STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT, TIMOR-LESTE

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