

STATEMENT OF SPAIN
TIMOR LESTE PARTNERS MEETING
DILI 2 - 4 APRIL 2009

I am honoured to have attended this event on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of Spain and the Spanish Ambassador to Timor Leste. The Government of Spain wishes to commend the Government, the Institutions and the People of Timor Leste for the achieved progress towards the stability of the Nation and for the efforts being relentlessly made towards development.

In addition Spain takes this opportunity to congratulate the Timorese Government, the United Nations and the World Bank for organising this annual event. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the referendum which opened the way to the independence of Timor-Leste. But as PM Gusmão underlined in May 2002 “independence will have no value if people in Timor Leste continue to live in poverty”.

To help Timor Leste in its fight against poverty and to attain the Millennium Development Goals, Spain has been cooperating with this country since 2001. At that time, two Spanish legal advisors contributed with much expertise to the drafting of the national Constitution. Additional funding was also provided to the Salesian community to build up teaching and training facilities.

In 2007 Spain reaffirmed a long term commitment with Timor Leste by opening up a Co-operation Office and signing a Co-operation Agreement in November. That year. Since then the level of assistance of Spain has multiplied two-fold and seven members of the Government and President Horta have visited Spain.

We intend to sail full steam together. To this purpose we wish to hold our First Joint Committee with the Government of Timor Leste this year, making the most of the fact that the Spanish Co-operation has recently approved a Master Plan for the period of 2009-2012 addressing issues of real interest for the development of this country.

Let me underline, however, that we bear in mind the Paris Declaration and the EU Code of Conduct. Therefore Spain has streamlined its ODA and narrowed down its assistance in Timor Leste to two sectors where we believe that Spanish experience may be relevant, namely: in good governance and rural development.

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In addition, several measures were adopted in order to coordinate and improve the quality and impact of the Spanish and the European aid in Timor Leste: a MOU with Portugal was signed a year ago and specific activities were carried out jointly with the European Commission and other Member States.

We are fully aware, however, of all the difficulties arising in the way to the development of Timor Leste. These have already been mentioned in the Statement by the European Union and Spain consequently shares and endorses the recommendations made there.

Finally, we all are worried about the impact of the current global financial and economic downturn in Less Developed Countries. A prudent and rational use of public funds and a coherent and complementary use of international assistance most certainly will pave the way to a solid and sustainable development in this country and for its people.

Your Excellency, the Prime Minister,

To end my intervention, allow me to borrow some significant words pronounced by you in May 2002: “If yesterday we were witnesses of the resolve to build the democratic foundations for the entire Timorese society, today, we are witnesses to the hope for the future based on the active and permanent struggle against poverty in all its forms”.

Thank you very much