



JOINT DECLARATION

Taking into consideration that article 42 of the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste defines that everyone is guaranteed the freedom to assemble and peacefully demonstrate;

Taking into consideration that the Constitution of the DRET defines that the objectives of the State is to defend and guarantee political democracy and participation of the people in the resolution of national problems;

Having observed the peaceful and orderly manner in which sentiments have been manifested that raise fundamental questions of governance worthy of consideration for the political orientation of the country;

Taking into consideration that the Constitution of the DRTL guarantees freedom of conscience, of religion and cult, and establishes separation between religious denominations and the State;

Taking into account that the Constitution of the DRET attributes to the State the duty to promote cooperation with all different religious denominations;

Recognizing the competences the Constitution of the DRET attributes to the Government;

The Government and Bishops of the Catholic Church of East Timor, based on the due respect for the Constitution of the DRET, affirm jointly and solemnly:

1. Recognize the important contribution that religious values have in the construction of the national identity, in the construction of the nation, and in the socio- economic, cultural, and political level;
2. Recognize the fundamental role that moral and religious values play in the formation of the individual;
3. Recognize that these values should be incorporated in the educational mission entrusted to Schools;
4. Recognize that education should adequately correspond to the aspirations of all citizens, without any form of discrimination;

5. Recognize that the teaching of Religion must be included as a regular discipline in the curriculum, and consequently, taught during normal hours, and attendance subject to a decision at the time of enrollment and in accordance with the options freely expressed by their Parents – who are the irreplaceable partners in making concrete options that relate to the education of their children.
6. The Draft Penal Code should address the abortion issue in all its dimensions; abortion must be defined as a crime, except in cases where it is absolutely necessary to avoid the mother's death. The law must equally define the practice of voluntary prostitution as a crime, but should protect victims forced into prostitution. Likewise, as already envisaged in the Draft Penal Code, art. 155 and 156, the exploitation of children is defined as a crime.
7. To guarantee that there will not be threats or retaliation from the authorities against the demonstrators when they return to their place of residence, and to guarantee their physical security and social environment free of intimidation;
8. To establish a Permanent Working Group within a month from the date of signing this Joint Declaration. This Permanent Working Group will be composed of representatives from the Government, the Catholic Church and other religious denominations, and its mission is to accompany the concretization of the principles here established, to make recommendations that are relevant and opportune in all areas of its intervention and to provide better understanding of the existing problems and prevent future problems.

Díli, 7 May 2005

Dr. Mari Alkatiri
Prime Minister

D. Alberto Ricardo da Silva
Bishop of Díli

D. Basílio do Nascimento
Bishop of Baucau

In the presence of:

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão
President of the Republic