Dili, 27 de Novembro 2019

Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing +25 Review
Bangkok, 27-29 Nov 2019

Statement on the agenda item 2: Review of the progress made, challenges to address and forward-looking policies to enact in order to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and platform for action in Asia and the Pacific in the context of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development
27 Nov 2019 (time allocation is 4 hours and 50 minutes)

Excellency’s
Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentleman,

On behalf of Her Excellency Ms. Maria José da Fonseca Monteiro de Jesus, Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion of Timor-Leste, I will read her brief statement highlighted our achievement, challenges, policy responses to the implementation of the Beijing Report and way forward. Due to other commitment she is unable to join with us today but she is thanking the organizing committee for the opportunity so Timor-Leste can share and contribute to the dialogue in order to improve gender equality and women empowerment.

Achievements/Progress

Timor-Leste has made strong advancements towards gender equality and empowers all women and girls. Laws, policies and programs have been designed by the government to ensure equal protection of human rights and safety for men, women and children. Timor-Leste has made progress and achievement in health, education, justice, politics and economy.

On Health

Since 2010, Timor-Leste has made progress in the reducing of maternal mortality and infant mortality rates. Maternal mortality rates has reduced from 557/100,000 child births in 2010 to 218/100,000 child births in 2016. Infant mortality rate has reduced from 45/1,000 child births in 2010 to 30/1,000 child births in 2016. Investment into antenatal care visits has reduce maternal and infant mortality and also significantly increase in the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel, from 30% in 2010 to 56.7% in 2016.

On Education

The Timor-Leste Government is committed to provide an inclusive education for all. Capacity development of inclusive education is provided for all teachers. To date, 520 teachers have received training, with 250 being female. The Government is working hard to improve access to education for people with disability. Currently 931 students with disability have access to form education, with 430 being female. Efforts are continue to make sure inclusion education for girls and people with disability is secure and addressed. Facilitation
and coordination are continuing among stakeholders to facilitate re-entry to school for girls who have had to drop-out due to pregnancy.

On Justice

Measures to improve women’s access to justice have continued to be implemented. The law against domestic violence was enacted in 2010. It is clearly that domestic violence is a public crime, punishable under the Penal Code. Increasing number of perpetrators of domestic violence is being prosecuted under the formal judicial system. From 2014 to 2018, 3891 cases of Domestic Violence were registered. Out of this, 3430 were indicted. Also, 91% of domestic violence cases monitored in 2018 were prosecuted. The implementation of the law against Domestic Violence has facilitated an increase of cases being reported.

Women in politics

The government priorities women in politics and has established a quota to ensure that at least 30% of Parliament seats are held by women. We are proud to say that women’s participation in the National Parliament has surpassed the quota, and now at 38%. Women’s participation in public administration reached 11,847 out of total 34,142 in 2018. However, challenges remains -increasing women’s participation political in municipality level.

Women engagement in economy

Women’s participation in the economy has been increase. The rate of women’s participation in the labour force has increased from 54.7% in 2010 to 56.1% in 2015. In 2016, women’s participation was reported to be 9,886 (46.7%) in comparison to male’s participation of 11, 288 (53.3%). Over 50% of participant’s in government-run profession training programs are also women.

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Challenges

Despite the progress made towards promoting gender equality in health, education, justice, politics, and the economy, however challenges remains. Let me mentioned some of the challenges that we are currently facing such as;

Domestic Violence

The rates of domestic violence are still high throughout the country. Based on the 2016 Demographic Health Survey, shows that 33% of women aged 15 to 49 have experienced physical violence. Many victims and survivors don’t have access to formal justice due to limited availability of police and judicial actors to support gender-based violence cases. For women in rural areas the physical distance from the Courts is an additional barrier to accessing justice. Timor-Leste has a strong patriarchal system, where gender norms and stigma contributes to attitudes that support violence towards women and limit women’s access to resources.
Land Ownership

The new Land Law was approved in 2017 has provided a modern legal framework to ensure equal rights to land ownership. In 2010, 80% of land in Timor-Leste was obtained from heritage through traditional law. This means that women had limited access to and control of the land. This is especially a challenge for adolescent mothers, who have been abandoned or left by their partners, and vulnerable widows when participating in land disputes. The challenge is remain on how to guarantee land title ownership to vulnerable women and girls.

Participation in Labour Force

Women’s participation in the labour force continues to be low. The male employment rate is higher than women across all sectors in Timor-Leste. Domestic labour and low literacy and education levels are still barriers for improving women’s participation in the formal economic sector. In the agriculture sector women’s capacity in efficient production is still low and women are experiencing difficulties accessing national and international markets. Moreover, the irrigation system is still not able to facilitate strong production due to its seasonal cycle. This means that there is an over reliance on imports rather than promotion of local products, leading to food security concerns.

Budget Allocation

Budget allocation for gender policy implementation was insufficient to address gender concerns in rural areas for the period from 2014 to 2018. There are still some implementing line ministries that have not allocated sufficient budgets to implement gender activities outlined in the gender policies.

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Let me share with you all, the government policies in the order to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Declaration.

Since gained independence in 2002, Timor-Leste government has invested in a wide range of policies to support the advancement of gender equality and women’s economic empowerment. Several policy priorities have been established that aligned with the Beijing Declaration, aiming to enhance opportunities for women and girls. The policy priorities are as follows:

Firstly, Strengthening the National Women’s Machinery

- Secretary state for Equality and Inclusion of Timor-Leste continues to advocates, designs, coordinates, and evaluates gender-sensitive policies, laws, programs, plans, and budgets for the promotion of gender equality, empowerment of girls and women, and social inclusion across all Line Ministries.
• Secretary state for Equality and Inclusion continue its efforts to strengthening governance mechanisms by improving coordination and decision-making of gender equality. In June 2017, the Government approved Resolution No. 35/2017 to establish effective and efficient coordination at the parliamentary, national and municipality levels. This aims to improve coordination, implementation and monitoring across the country, and specifically at the municipality level.

• Inter-Ministerial Working Group for SDGs has been developed since the adoption of the 2030 agenda. This working group aims to monitor and implement the 2030 Agenda.

Secondly, ensuring women’s economic empowerment

• The second phase of the Maubisse Declaration was renewed in October 2018, influencing institutions to support women and girls in rural areas, specifically focused

• on women’s economic empowerment. The Maubisse Declaration is also linked to legislation that allows women to access loans from the bank.

• A Land Law was approved in 2017, which includes the promotion of equal rights to land ownership to empower more vulnerable groups such as single women and women with a disability.

• The Rotative Cash Transfer, a new policy investment worth $1.5 million, is currently being designed to support over 100 women’s groups to build sustainabel business opportunities.

Thirdly, reduce maternal mortality, universal social protection and public services

• To reduce maternal and infant mortality rates, the Ministry of Health has established Guidelines to review maternal mortality in hospitals and to provide capacity building for health practitioners to respond to maternal cases.

• To increase literacy levels among both females and males a new evidence-based curriculum for pre-school and primary was finalised in 2015. This progressive curriculum focuses on developing knowledge, critical intellectual and social skills, and promoting creativity and problem-solving skills.

• To improve the social protection system the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion (MSSI) is carrying out a review on types of social protection schemes and also finalising the Social Protection National Strategy.

• The MOU on biletal cooperation between Timor-Leste and Portugal has been signed to promote social protection and social security for FY 2019-2022.

Fourthly, freedom from violence, stigma, stereotypes and social norms

• In 2017, the Government approved the second phase of the National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence for the period 2017 to 2021. The second phase is focused on prevention, services for victims of violence, access to justice, and implementation and monitoring of the plan.

• The Government has implemented a “zero tolerance” policy towards violence to prevent acts of violence in schools and has approved operational guidelines on “No to Sexual Harassment in Public Service.”
• SEII has introduced materials on GBV to the Judicial Training Centre and Judiciary, and is developing materials on GBV for training in the National Institute for Public Administration (INAP) in 2019.

Fifthly, Women, peace and security

• The National Action Plan for UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2016-2020) is a transformative gender policy that provides support for women to participate in peace building, state building, conflict resolution and the development process.
• Approval of Law No. 3/2017 on the Prevention and Elimination of Human Trafficking on 24 October 2016, provides measures to protect victims and prevent and combat human trafficking. This is an important step to reduce human rights violations associated with human trafficking.
• In 2018, PNTL established and launched gender strategies that will help contribute to the achievement of the Timor-Leste National Police mission.

Sixthly, increase and empower women’s representation in political life at local and national levels

• The women’s national political representation quota requires that 1 in 3 parliamentarians must be women, which continues to increase women’s participation in politics. Currently it stands at 38%, the highest in the Asia Pacific region.
• Approval of the Suco Law No. 9/2016 confirmed that at least two women candidates must run in the Village Chief Election. This law aims to increase women’s representation at the municipal level.
• Every four years Secretary state for Equality and Inclusion holds women’s congress at the municipal level to support an increase in women’s leadership. In 2019 Secretary state for Equality and Inclusion led a Women’s Congress in all 13 municipalities to identify training opportunities to improve women’s empowerment in political life, and also to work towards building capacity of potential women in rural areas to prepare them to lead their communities.

Strengthening gender-responsive national statistical systems and data collection

• The Secretary state for Equality and Inclusion and UPMA have developed the Gender Responsive Budgeting Policy under the “Good Governance and Institutional Management” policy. This system will support the Government to generate a gender sensitive report and will enable all public institutions to be responsible for gender commitments within their service delivery.
• This gender reform within the planning and budgeting system will provide opportunities for strong data collection. This data collection will provide important
Conclusion

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To end, I would like to say that, although, Timor-Leste has achieved great progress towards promoting gender equality in health, education, justice, politics, and the economy, there continue to be a number of challenges to address in our work towards equality and women’s empowerment.

The government of Timor-Leste reiterated its commitment to implement Beijing Declaration and continues to work closely and maintain coordination with all the stakeholders such as Civil Society, private sectors and development partners to integrate a gender mainstreaming approach across all sectors.

The Government is continue to seek support from the relevant agencies to support and assist our government to accelerate and implementing the Beijing declaration to meet SDG's and 2030 agenda.

Maria José da Fonsaeca Monteiro de Jesus
Secretary of State For Equality and Inclusion