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Media release

30 May 2007

Fretilin's strong anti-corruption record

Timor-Leste's (East Timor's) Fretilin government has taken a “zero tolerance” approach to corruption and built a strong legal and institutional framework to combat abuse of power by officials, a party spokesperson says.

FRETILIN spokesperson and parliamentary candidate Cipriana Pereira outlined numerous specific measures implemented or supported by the government in the past five years to ensure a clean and honest administration for all East Timorese.

“FRETILIN's position on corruption has always been clear – zero tolerance,” Pereira said.

Speaking in a nationally televised live debate involving all political parties yesterday, she said measures included setting up the Office of the Provedor (ombudsman), the Office of the Inspector General, and the Petroleum Fund.

“The FRETILIN Government also decided to decentralize financial responsibility in stages, not at once, to allow time to build local capacity for financial management,” Pereira said.

“The Government also annually contracts international, independent auditors to review government expenditure and accounts, to strengthen transparency, accountability and good governance”.

Pereira cited the Timorese non-governmental organization, LABEH, which reported that government corruption exists only on a small scale, does not involve large diversions of money, and is limited to allegations of contracts being awarded without following legal procedures (“Corruption Watch Report 2007” dated 17 May 2007).

Pereira said: “The reason why corruption exists only on a small scale is because of the good governance framework we put in place. I have been in parliament since before the restoration of the independence and have seen the transparency with which our budget approval and budget expenditure review process is scrutinised.”

Pereira said it was FRETILIN which proposed the creation of an Office of the Provedor during the 2001 constitutional assembly which drafted the Constitution.

“The creation of the Office of the Provedor has been the most important factor in allowing citizens to lodge complaints about abuse of power and human right abuses by state institutions,” she said.

“It has functioned with the utmost independence. In only a few years, this Office has established a reputation for credible and independent investigation of complaints”.

In regards to the Office of the Inspector General, Pereira said former Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri referred more than 10 cases of alleged corruption uncovered by the Inspector General to the Prosecutor General's office. However, the Prosecutor General was appointed by the former President and his Office is independent of the government. The Prosecutor General's Office failed to progress the action needed to investigate the cases referred.

Pereira said the Petroleum Fund and the legal framework which established it were recognized internationally as best practice and as a transparent means to manage the nation's petroleum revenues.

“The government has also done well to resist decentralizing financial responsibility too quickly. This is because there is still a lack of capacity to properly administer finances at a local authority level.”

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