



Vote for FRETILIN!

2007 Parliamentary Elections

“From the people, with the people and for the people”

Media release

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Only FRETILIN can guarantee economic sovereignty

FRETILIN General Secretary Mari Alkatiri today challenged the FRETILIN government’s critics to explain what concrete policies they had to match his party’s strategy to defend Timor-Leste’s economic sovereignty and provide strong economic management.

Dr Alkatiri said that when FRETILIN came to office five years ago it inherited an economy in total disarray.

“Since 2002, we have built the foundations for Timor-Leste’s economic independence. Now our critics say they can do better. We encourage them to explain to the people exactly how their policies will preserve our independence and create an equal and prosperous society,” he said.

Dr Alkatiri, who attracted strong criticism from Australia for his tough stand in the Timor Sea oil negotiations, is number two on FRETILIN’s ticket for the parliamentary elections to be held on 30 June 2007. Dr Alkatiri’s skill as an administrator during his time as PM was acknowledged even by his harshest critics. He is widely-credited with being the architect of Timor-Leste’s strongly nationalist economic policy.

“We live in a competitive globalised world,” Dr Alkatiri continued. “Many countries who fought hard for their independence are now losing it, because they failed to control their economy. We see many countries in our region losing control of their land, their natural resources, and even their labour force, which is being forced to emigrate to find work in other places. Small countries like Timor-Leste are especially vulnerable.”

Dr Alkatiri pointed to some of the main FRETILIN achievements. “Everyone knows that we won a better oil and gas deal than the Australian government wanted to give us. We have built a management regime for the oil revenue which will guarantee our independence for many decades.

“We refused to borrow money, because we knew how some foreign powers have used loans to control the policies of the borrowing countries. We built a strong regime to control foreign investment, and to prevent us losing control of our vital assets, including our land.

“More recently, we completed planning for a program of accelerated national development, to build our road network, our electricity network, our water supply systems and our workforce.”

“The opposition parties did not and still have not proposed detailed alternatives to our strategy,” said Dr Alkatiri.

“This is because they have no policies to guarantee protection of our vital assets. Our recently-elected President is now claiming that he has better poverty reduction ideas which FRETILIN prevented him from implementing when he was Prime Minister. This too is careless talk. Let us not forget that he was a member of our government which made these policies; he sat at the Council of Ministers meetings when we debated them. Did he propose alternatives?”

Alkatiri continued: “Our ex-President alleges we used our cars and our positions only to enrich ourselves. People say things like this in elections campaigns. It is easy to be a demagogue at a rally. We all learned these skills in our resistance struggle.

“A different kind of leadership is needed for the complex tasks of economic management. Our leaders all need to learn these new things, economic and financial management whether in government or opposition.

“We should not depend on foreign experts to run our country. Yes, we need and appreciate expert technical assistance from internationals but Timorese must be in charge and must know how to do this.

“Debate is good for democracy. We challenge every opposition party to debate us on the economic management of Timor-Leste. Let the people decide who is best-equipped to defend our economic independence in the new conditions of the 21st century.

“We all owe it to all our sisters and brothers who died for our independence to get this right. If we do not get our economic policy right, foreign interests will use their money to take from us what our martyrs fought and died for.”

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