



Vote for FRETILIN!

2007 Parliamentary Elections

“Defending Timor-Leste’s independence”

Media release

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FRETILIN advances women’s participation in politics

The FRETILIN government has overcome enormous barriers to help women in Timor-Leste (East Timor) achieve greater participation in political life.

“Representation of women in the Timor-Leste parliament is among the highest in the world, despite very low education levels,” said Ana Pessoa Minister for State Administration and a FRETILIN parliamentary candidate.

“It was FRETILIN who argued strongly for the inclusion of a specific clause in the Constitution to guarantee equality,” she said.

Ms Pessoa said, “FRETILIN has worked to build a legislative framework to fulfil the constitutional commitment to equality since taking government in 2002.”

Ms Pessoa is a former provincial judge in Mozambique and an experienced civil law jurist. She has wide experience in legal issues concerning women’s and children’s rights and had extensive input into the drafting of Timor-Leste’s Constitution.

“It was FRETILIN that ensured women were well represented in the Constitutional Assembly and the first parliament by having 27% female representation it is first parliamentary list. This has resulted in the representation of women in the East Timorese parliament being amongst the highest in the world, including the first world. In the forthcoming election 22 of our candidates are women when the minimum requirement is 16.

“The electoral laws developed by my Ministry require all parties to ensure one in four candidates for parliamentary elections are women. If given another term in office FRETILIN will work towards improving on this ratio. My Ministry was also responsible for the local suco (administrative level) council legislation which included a requirement that two women representatives and a representative of young women be present in each suco council.”

Ms Pessoa said FRETILIN has also promoted women to senior positions in government.

“Currently women hold senior positions in the Council of Ministers, including the Minister and Vice Minister of Planning and Finance, the Minister and one of the Vice Ministers of Education and Culture, the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, the Minister of Public Works and myself, as Minister for State Administration.

“We also appointed women to senior positions in the civil service. The Permanent Secretary of Agriculture for example, is a woman. We established an Office for the Promotion of Equality inside the Prime Minister’s Office and each Ministry has a focal point for gender issues. These are some of the practical expressions of the FRETILIN government’s commitment to developing a modern society in which women are treated as equals and with respect.

“I believe FRETILIN has been able to sustain women’s rights as a priority issue in our party because almost 50% of our members on the National Political Commission and almost 30% of members on the Central Committee are women. The National Political Commission and the Central Committee are the highest decision -making organs within FRETILIN.

“These legal and administrative measures are just part of the process to improve the overall status of women. In a country with very low education levels, and where 52% of women are illiterate, there are huge barriers to women’s equal participation in the economic, social and political life of the nation.” said Ms Pessoa.

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