



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE
MINISTERIO DA SAUDE
Gabinete do Ministro

COUNTRY STATEMENT

By

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The United Nations High Level Meeting on the
Comprehensive Review of the Progress Achieved in
Realizing the Declaration on HIV/AIDS
8-10 June 2011

New York, 8-10 June 2011

Honorable President of the General Assembly
Honorable Secretary General of the United Nations
Distinguished Executive Director of UNAIDS
Honorable Heads of States and Government Representatives
Representatives of International Organizations and of Civil Societies
Ladies and Gentleman,

It is an honor and a great privilege for me to stand among all of you here during this important event, to represent my country both as Minister of Health and as the President of the National Commission to combat HIV-AIDS in one of the youngest countries in the world. My President, His Excellency Jose Ramos-Horta, regrets to miss such an important event that is close to his heart due to other similarly important matters and has kindly asked me to represent our country instead.

With just over a million populations, Timor-Leste became an independent state in 2002. It is a country that has emerged from conflict and faces the extremely difficult task of rebuilding the nation's health system with limited human capital and financial resources. This is exacerbated further by the challenges of limited access to a basic package of health services.

The National HIV-AIDS Program in Timor-Leste began its full implementation in 2005 with the first National Strategic Plan developed covering the period of 2006-2010. The National AIDS Commission was established with the overall responsibility for oversight of the National HIV/STI Strategic Plan. Significant funding did not come into the program until the successful Round 5 Global Fund to Fight TB, Malaria and HIV/AIDS proposal.

Excellencies,

From 2003 through 2010, a total of 202 HIV positive cases were confirmed, including 15 children under the age of 5. Most new cases detected in 2010 were in the population age range of 25-44 years with 43% of women testing HIV positive, and an overall 46% HIV positive rate for women. As of December 2010, there were 39 people on ART, including 3 children. The role of our fellow country friends of Brazil in donating Anti Retro Viral medicines to Timor-Leste to treat these patients was crucial in the early years when first cases were identified in

Timor-Leste back in 2003. I sincerely would like to take this opportunity to thank the Brazilian Government for their immediate response to support our country during such important times. Attention to HIV/AIDS was very limited and constrained resources were being directed towards building the foundations of our newly independent state.

Although Timor-Leste remains a low prevalence country, it is experiencing higher rates of HIV transmission than projected. There is with less than 1% sero positive status among vulnerable populations, through epidemiological modeling undertaken in 2005. Many of you may find these numbers comparatively small, however, the high risk behavior among the high risk population remains a challenge which require immediate actions. Besides, Timor-Leste has a large majority of the population being young, with 60% of youth below the age of 24. Almost one third of the population (31.3%) is between the ages of 10 to 24 years and nearly 50% of the country's population is either adolescent or young. As a result, combined efforts, coupled by strong commitment from the Prime Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao, were put in place to developed a new 2011-2016 National HIV and STI Strategic Plan.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV-AIDS (PLHIV) is critical to ethical and effective national response to the HIV epidemic. In Timor-Leste, the HIV-AIDS Program extends beyond just treatment, care and support to include prevention, legal and social justice issues, and any aspect of activity in addressing the HIV epidemic. Collaborative efforts from our President, the Parliamentary Women's Working Group, Government, Church Organizations, National Council of Youth, the Military and the Policy force, and NGO Forum ("FONTIL"), have all be the driving force towards combating the associated effects of HIV/AIDS and controlling the spread of the virus in the country.

Indeed, a multisectoral approach is needed to combat the spread of HIV-AIDS and the new Strategic Plan pays significant attention to the following priorities:

- establishing an enabling environment in which issues related to HIV and STIs can be openly discussed through a coalition for gender equality, sexual and reproductive health

- access to a basic service package including HIV and STI knowledge through an Integrated Community Health Services approach or SISCa
- targeted prevention programs for individuals with multiple partners outside of the Most at Risk Group which include Men having Sex with Men, Female Sex Workers, clients of Female Sex Workers and people in the Uniformed Services
- scaling up prevention, treatment and care services in border districts with Indonesia through cooperation mechanisms with the Indonesian Ministry of Health
- ensuring universal coverage of life skills based sex education for young people
- achieving universal access to treatment for those who are infected by increasing coverage of testing and counseling
- strengthening the capacity of the health system to respond to the increased need for HIV treatment services by continuing efforts to assist with “bolsa da mae” or mother’s package, coordinating with NGOs and the Ministry of Social Solidarity who are directly working with patients and their families in establishing appropriate links for continued care, prevention and financial assistance
- strengthening community sector systems to enhance quality of service delivery, particularly in the most remote areas of the country through the 507 SISCa Posts established across the country in every village

Ladies and Gentleman,

Timor-Leste fully supports the new agenda “towards zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths”. As a young country experiencing low prevalence rates of HIV-AIDS, I challenge the international community to continue supporting young countries like Timor-Leste to achieve this vision. Continued research and increased financial commitment by government and donors is essential to ensure sustained efforts to fight HIV.

Timor-Leste welcomes the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1983, which recognizes the HIV and AIDS epidemic as a threat to global peace and security. It rightly acknowledges the need for sustainable assistance to women living with or affected by HIV in conflict and post-conflict situations and the need to incorporate an HIV and AIDS focus

into peacekeeping efforts. To combat the stigma around HIV and AIDS, heads of peacekeeping forces in Timor-Leste and many of their troops have volunteered to be tested for HIV as an example to those who still dread public discourse about the disease. As the Security Council noted in the Resolution, the disproportionate burden of HIV and AIDS on women presents persistent obstacles to gender equality and the empowerment of women. We echo UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's sentiment that efforts to combat HIV and AIDS must be linked to campaigns against sexual violence and for the rights of women. The perilous interactions among AIDS, the international drug trade, sex trafficking and the abuse of women cannot be overlooked.

We must act together as one global nation in order to protect the lives of our global people and future generations.

Thank you all very much.