



Statement

by

**H.E. Ms. Sofia Borges
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of the
Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
to the United Nations**

**to the
Third Committee
of the 66th United Nations General Assembly
on the
Advancement of Women**

**12 October 2011
New York**

Check Against Delivery

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished delegates,

As this is the first time I am taking the floor, let me first congratulate you and your Bureau on your election, and assure you of Timor-Leste's full support and commitment to the work of this important committee.

Timor-Leste associates itself with the statement delivered earlier by Argentina on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

Timor-Leste considers gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls to be a priority, and the Government is fully committed to its realization. The Strategic Development Plan that will guide our development agenda through 2030 places special emphasis on gender issues and recognizes the catalyzing role women have in development. We are working towards the goal of becoming a "gender-fair society where human dignity and women's rights are valued, protected, and promoted by our laws and culture. "

It is with this commitment that Timor-Leste approaches the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Since its adoption sixteen years ago, the Beijing Declaration has become the blueprint for the development and promotion of women's access to health and social services, education, and economic opportunities.

Mr. Chairman,

The ability of women to participate in, and to achieve political change is clear. This past year has demonstrated the drive and desire of women around the world to participate equally in all aspects of decision making and the need for women to be included in development activities. In this regard, Timor-Leste welcomes the adoption of the Joint Declaration: on Advancing Women's Political Participation on the margins of the high level general debate this year.

In promoting women's rights it is important to stress the transformative impact women have in politics and in peace efforts. In this regard I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating the 3 recent Nobel Peace prize winners from Liberia and Yemen, and the non-violent work they are doing to achieve safety for women and the full participation of women in peace-building, and state building efforts.

We are proud to highlight that our National Parliament enjoys 29% representation by women, the highest in our region. Timor-Leste plans to surpass this figure by setting a goal of 35% women parliamentarians by 2015. This will be achieved with assistance of the newly adopted Electoral Law, which states that 1 in 3 candidates nominated by a political party must be a woman. At the local levels, leadership training for female

candidates is expected to increase the level of women on village councils, allowing participation to surpass the current 28%.

However, increasing the representation of women in politics is only one of many steps towards empowerment and gender equality. In this regard, we welcome the flagship report by UN Women entitled, "In Pursuit of Justice" and agree that effective justice systems are crucial in providing a strong foundation for equality and protection of human rights.

My delegation believes that building a State based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law to be a priority and the foundation to lasting peace and stability for all nations. As a young country, Timor-Leste is committed to building strong justice institutions that promote equality and equity at all levels of society. In this regard, The Justice System Programme launched in 2003 will be implemented until 2013 has the goal of strengthening institutional capacity, and improving access to justice. The Programme supports Timor-Leste's only training institution, the Legal Training Center, which provides courses and training for judges, prosecutors, public defenders, private lawyers, legal drafters, justice clerks, notaries and translators.

The number of national judges, prosecutors, and public defenders has increased to 51, and includes 14 women. In fact this past year the first women judge was appointed to the Court of Appeals. The prevention of violence and discrimination is a very serious concern for Timor-Leste. In this regard, the Law Against Domestic Violence together with the Penal Code passed criminalizes most sexual crimes. Currently work is being done to address the oft-unreported stigmatized crimes of gender-based violence.

Violence against women remains a serious problem which the Government is working diligently to combat. Sensitization and awareness campaigns continue and are conducted in approximately 10 sucos/villages per month. In accordance with the law, four women's centres have already opened, which provide shelter, as well as legal, medical, psychological, and social services to women and children. Plans to open similar centers in every district are currently underway.

Mr. Chairman,

As the nexus between women and development opportunities, including politics, becomes all the more clear, Timor-Leste welcomes the focus UN Women has placed to promote women and development, especially within the Least Developed Countries.

While UN Women was established less than one year ago, Timor-Leste is confident in its ability to advocate and promote the needs and rights of women and girls worldwide, and we are committed to working towards a strong entity. We welcome the commitment by UN Women and the CEDAW Committee to collaborate and coordinate their activities in areas of common interest to ensure the best outcomes for women.

Thank you.