



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate publication

UNDP AND THE PRESS COUNCIL OF TIMOR-LESTE SIGN A LETTER OF AGREEMENT TO PROMOTE INFORMED AND COVID-RESILIENT ELECTIONS

Dili, 23/12/2021 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), supported by the Government of Japan, and the Press Council of Timor-Leste joined efforts to build capacities of journalists regarding political and election reporting throughout the electoral cycle to ensure informed-decision making and COVID-safety.

A Letter of Agreement was signed by the two parties on the 23rd of December at the Press Council of Timor-Leste office in Dili, with the participation of representatives from UNDP, the Press Council of Timor-Leste, and the Embassy of Japan. Via this partnership, the Press Council of Timor-Leste will develop National Guideline for Journalists to Report on Elections, including dissemination and socialization with media, and the implementation of awareness-raising campaigns on the guidelines at the national and municipal levels.

“Access to information is a critical element of successful and COVID-safe elections. Voters have the rights to know not only about the electoral system, the procedures, and the political parties and candidates, but also how to ensure COVID-safety whilst participating in the elections. In this regard, the media plays an essential role in enabling access to information and informed decision making, and public safety,” explained Ms Munkhtuya Altangerel, UNDP Resident Representative.

On the other hand, Mr Virgílio da Silva Guterres, President of the Press Council of Timor-Leste, remarked that “given that a biased coverage of political issues can skew the election debate, and at worst, provoke political division and violence, it is important that media actors are trained in the principles of responsible reporting and inclusive politics so that the voices of the political actors and parties can be heard by the Timorese public through the media in a balanced and informative way.”



Finally, Ms Kazumi Yamada, Deputy Head of Mission to Timor-Leste stated: “I am delighted that one of the components of COVID Resilient Elections, or CORE-TL Project, funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by UNDP, is informed citizen and election. Through the letter of agreement signed as a part of this component today, I hope the journalists will develop their own guidelines that can be applied to a wide variety of media. I also look forward to training sessions under this agreement on facts checking and other important skills that will lead to better informed decision making by the voters of Timor-Leste.”

These activities are part of the COVID-Resilient Project (CORE-TL), which seeks to support Timor-Leste to conduct COVID-resilient, informed, and inclusive elections by contributing to the resilience of accessible, accountable, and gender-responsive governance systems, institutions, and services at the national and municipal levels.

The Press Council and UNDP have cooperated since 2017 to strengthen the competence of the country’s journalists, marked with an electoral in-depth reporting training early 2017 before both presidential and legislative elections and comprehensive journalism training for the young journalists.

For further details, please contact the Press Council and UNDP’s official in charge at:

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