

Portugal cooperates with Timor-Leste in the search for metallic mineral resources

The National Energy and Geology Laboratory (LNEG) is cooperating with its counterpart in Timor-Leste in assessing the country's mineral potential with a view to its sustainable development, the researcher coordinating the work said today.

Lusa, 7 March 2025. Machine translation

Igor Pereira Morais, who leaves for the Portuguese-speaking country on Tuesday to resume the survey already started, told the Lusa news agency that "there is already identified potential in Timor-Leste for chromium, nickel, copper and gold".

LNEG sees support for the assessment of metallic mineral resources in the former colony of Portugal as a "decisive factor for its sustainable development".

"With the energy transition, we are moving towards an economy that uses metals intensively. For example, all wiring requires huge amounts of copper," said the researcher, who has a master's degree in Geosciences from the University of Coimbra (UC).

Igor Morais said that this collaboration between LNEG and the Timor-Leste Institute of Geosciences (IGTL) has also involved researchers from the Department of Earth Sciences at the same university.

"We have extensive experience in this type of project. We contribute at least in defining the areas with the greatest probability of metallic minerals existing," he said.

As part of this international cooperation, the National Energy and Geology Laboratory "will also support the training of Timorese colleagues", two of whom, for this purpose, will be welcomed in the coming months at the LNEG Aljustrel Campus, with the support of the Alentejo municipality.

In the researcher's opinion, the "consolidation of historical ties" between Portugal and East Timor can happen "basically in terms of training".

"We have a fundamental role in the transfer of knowledge between the two countries", highlighted Igor Morais.

If the Portuguese-Timorese cooperation project confirms the existence of potential in the area of metallic minerals in the Southeast Asian country, it will be up to specialized companies, at a later stage, to "evaluate the resources with a view to their exploration", he said.

"We have already carried out an initial inventory. In the next phase, it is very necessary to go to the locations and delve deeper", Igor Morais added.

In a statement sent to Lusa, LNEG stated that "the extractive industry, particularly that of metallic mineral resources, presents a decisive factor in the sustainable development of modern societies".

Recalling that the European Union's economy "is highly deficient for a large set of these substances", the LNEG highlighted that "armed conflicts, political and geopolitical tensions, such as the one we are currently experiencing, place increasing pressure on the scientific community, particularly in the area of geology, to discover new mineral deposits".

Led by Igor Morais, from the Mineral Resources and Geophysics Unit of LNEG, the collaboration between the two countries aims to "make a decisive contribution to the inventory and systematic study of the true potential of Timor-Leste".

LNEG highlighted that it "has extensive experience" in this field, "both in national and international projects", including in Africa and South America.

"This inventory is being carried out by teams from IGTL and LNEG, through extensive field reconnaissance campaigns. There is then a need to place all this information on maps of appropriate scales, as was already done with the preliminary publication of the first three maps of mineral occurrences", explained the Portuguese researcher, quoted in the note.