

Presidency of the Council of Ministers

Eighth Constitutional Government

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Press Release

Meeting of the Council of Ministers of March 11, 2020

The Council of Ministers met at the Government Palace in Dili and approved the Draft Law, presented by the Acting Minister of Finance, Sara Lobo Brites, on the approval of the 3rd amendment to Law No. 13/2009 of October 21 on Budget and Financial Management. This changes Article 31 on the duodecimal regime and provides for a set of exceptions and easing rules, allowing full compliance with state obligations.

The Council of Ministers approved a draft Government Resolution, presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Dionísio da Costa Babo Soares, for the extension of the application and implementation of temporary interdiction measures and restriction of entry into national territory of foreign citizens, who in the last four weeks have left or been in transit in the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, the Italian Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Considering the risk associated with the rapid spread of the new coronavirus, the interdiction measures defined in accordance with this Resolution are reviewed every two weeks with a view to their maintenance or elimination. Under this Government Resolution, the Acting Minister of Health was also mandated to re-instruct the competent services of the Ministry of Health to, in coordination with the relevant ministerial lines, act in accordance with the protocols established by the World Health Organization.

The Minister of Public Works, Salvador Soares dos Reis Pires, presented a draft Decree-Law, approved by the Council of Ministers that creates the National Authority for Electricity and approves its Statutes. Through it, a Public Institute is created that will have as its main function to raise the quality of public electricity supply services, through its supervision and monitoring, providing the public with continuous information on the quality of the public service provided. The Regulation of the sector will provide a qualitative improvement in its operation, establish installation rules and technical standards to ensure the safety of people and goods.

The Minister of Public Works also presented a draft Decree-Law, approved by the Council of Ministers, which creates the Public Electricity Company of Timor-Leste, E.P. (EDTL, EP) and approves its Statutes. EDTL, EP will have as its main function the improvement of the quality of the services provided for electricity supply. Through a public company specialized in the electricity sector it will be possible to plan and manage the sector with greater agility, repairing or replacing existing infrastructures, expanding the supply network and applying best practices in the operation with a view to obtaining more revenue by applying the user pays principle. Further improving communication with consumers, raising awareness of the correct and prudent use of these services, establishing effective supervision of illegal connections and connecting with automatic or prepaid counting systems all Consumers.

The Acting Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, Fidelis Manuel Leite Magalhães, gave a presentation to the Council of Ministers on the Process of Accession of Timor-Leste to the World Trade Organization (WTO) – Questions and Answers concerning the “Memorandum on the Timor-Leste External Trade Regime” (MFTR). This presentation to the Council of Ministers aimed to share the main issues raised by some WTO member countries, as well as information on the first round of negotiations. All responses are based on policies and legal texts in force in Timor-Leste. The Council of Ministers authorised the Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs, as Chief Negotiator of the WTO

accession process, to formally submit to the WTO Secretariat the Document on Questions and Answers on the MFTR and also encouraged the Chief Negotiator of the WTO Accession Process to proceed with the preparatory actions necessary for the first round of accession negotiations within the Working Group.

Finally, the members of the Council of Ministers heard a presentation by the Acting Minister of Health, Élia António de Araújo dos Reis Amaral, to analyze the state of play of the prevention and control measures of the new Coronavirus (COVID-19). The General Directorate of Health Provision (DGPS), of the Ministry of Health, is monitoring the epidemiological situation under technical guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO) and has worked closely with the National Health Laboratory, the Guido Valadares National Hospital, the authorities responsible for the control and management of ports of entry, as well as other structures to support the management of outbreak prevention and control measures in Timor-Leste. The Acting Minister of Health presented the activities already carried out since January and the contingency plan that defines the level of response and action to minimize the risks of transmission by COVID-19 in Timor-Leste. It also presented the state of play of the preparation of the sites for isolation, quarantine and treatment, the protocol of sending samples of patients with suspected COVID-19 to Australia and the protocol of medical intervention to be performed in the case of positive cases. **ENDS**