

4.9 Environment

According to the Constitution of the Republic, everyone has the right to a healthy, ecologically balanced human life environment and the duty to protect and improve it for the benefit of future generations. The State recognizes the need to preserve and enhance natural resources. The State should promote the actions of defending the environment and safeguard the sustainable development of the economy.

The Timorese people have a strong connection to the environment that surrounds them, not only for survival issues but also for cultural and anthropological reasons. However, in addition to the natural causes such as rain, unbalanced exploitation or even environmental destruction have been causing chronic soil erosion, including through excessive logging and the lack of planning and monitoring of agricultural activities and the construction of infrastructures.

Erosion and landslides cause soil degradation and damage to water abstraction, decreasing the quantity and quality of groundwater and threatening wildlife and food resources. On the other hand, socioeconomic habits such as the use of firewood for cooking and air pollution caused by cars and motorized emissions and forest fires have contributed to an increase of respiratory disease.

Also, climate change with the consequent rise in sea level and the extreme weather conditions leading to floods, food insecurity, changes in chemical composition and sea temperature affecting coral reefs constitute a serious environmental challenge, to which Timor-Leste has to respond and create prevention mechanisms.

It should be noted that this is an additional challenge for Timor-Leste, considering its embryonic stage of development, with the frank need for an increase in industries to support economic growth. However, it is also underlined that Timor-Leste's contribution to the problem of climate change is miniscule, since Timor-Leste is one of the least emitting countries, compared to other emerging and developed nations.

It is also important to mention that the defense and conservation of the environment, including the promotion of biodiversity, is an important contribution to the development of an industry with strong potential, i.e. the growth of the tourism sector.

In this sense, the Government will pursue the following priority environmental objectives:

- Review and strengthen an institutional and legal environmental framework for the sustainable use of natural resources, including better planning and monitoring of cross-country development sectors, which prevents environmental deterioration and improves the country's environmental management;
- Promote campaigns on environmental issues and develop contents and actions that allow for generalized environmental education, focused on preserving the environment, for children, youth, adults and communities;
- Implement the National Land Management Plan, as well as its legislation, including the carrying out of environmental assessment and impact studies and surveys, before the construction of large projects;
- Improve inter-sectoral coordination to include environmental concerns in the country's development programs, including agriculture and fisheries, infrastructure development, tourism and the exploitation of energy resources;

- To train and improve the institutions and bodies responsible for the management, monitoring and control of environmental issues, with priority for the localities and areas of intervention that are most at risk of environmental degradation;
- Strengthen national and international partnerships for better environmental management.

To this end, the Government proposes to carry out the following actions:

- Implement the legal regime for environmental management, protection and conservation, including approved strategies and action plans (including national biodiversity legislation, protection of wildlife, etc.);
- Continue to monitor and endorse international agreements, programs and mechanisms related to the management and conservation of the environment and climate change, including translating these into national legislation and implementation of measures and standards adopted (reduction of HCFC emissions, Vienna Convention International Conventions UNFCCC, UNCCD, UNCBD, Paris Agreement, etc.);
- Continue the reforestation program for all degraded areas, especially the inclined areas around Dili and others considered as priority areas;
- Implement 100% community nurseries in the next 5 years, with the continued planting of 1 million trees every year, throughout the country;
- Introduce new programs and campaigns to reduce forest fires and burning during the dry season, including the gradual replacement of the use of firewood as a source of energy;
- Conduct studies on the use of renewable energies and continue to implement pilot projects for renewable energies, using wind, solar, hydroelectric and other renewable sources;
- Produce a strategic document on renewable energy, in coordination with the entity responsible for the electricity sector, for the implementation of clean energy;
- Develop the waste collection and treatment program (solid and liquid) throughout the country, with priority for the Dili area;
- Continue to ensure the implementation of the Healthy Juice Award and to develop the "Habali Ambiente" Prize for commercial, industrial and private entities promoting the 92 polluter pays principle, conservation of biodiversity, reduction of carbon emissions or other measures aimed at improving the environment;
- Develop and implement the regulation for the control of air, noise and soil pollution and air pollution of gases emitted by vehicles;
- Continue to invest in human resources capacity development in the area of environmental control, including the use of new methodologies and environmental testing;
- Establish an environmental laboratory to conduct environmental testing and its inspection, monitoring and control;
- Produce environmental statistics on Timor-Leste and ensure its dissemination, both for executive decision-making and for broader knowledge of the general public;
- Review the National Land Management Plan and its legislation, prior to its approval, assessing the environmental impacts;
- Implement the National Strategy for the mitigation of marine litter;
- Implement the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan;

- Work together with the CPLP on the commitment to develop the "CPLP Strategy for the Oceans", which is transversal to areas such as the environment and the economy;
- Continue to invest in an extensive network of national land and marine parks that protect representative samples of the country's biodiversity;
- Encourage greater knowledge about environmental protection and environmental principles in formal education curricula, as well as promote campaigns and actions through non-formal education;
- Continue to implement the "Green School" program that introduces the concept and practice of environmental sustainability, together with primary and secondary schools, in the national territory, as an extracurricular activity;
- Develop the National System of Protected Areas and National Parks and Conservation of Biodiversity, including the approval of integrated and sustainable management plans, namely for the "Nino Konis Santana" National Park, the "Xanana Gusmão" National Park and the Botanical Garden "Francisco Xavier do Amaral";
- Develop coordination between the governmental entity with responsibility for the environmental sector and the governmental entity with responsibility for the tourism sector, with a view to creating specific ecosystem protection programs, namely for turtles, corals, etc .;
- Implementing the "Zero Plastic Policy" throughout the territory and developing effective programs to combat plastic, with a view to replacing them whenever possible, including raising awareness of the harmful effects of plastic use, especially for the degradation of the seas of Timor, as well as develop the plastic recycling industry.
- Promote a population control system for crocodiles in order to minimize threats and attacks; Continue to identify and collect biodiversity data, including mapping the ecosystems of the different areas of terrestrial, marine, lake, wetland and other ecosystems at risk;
- Promote and reinforce good cultural practices aimed at environmental protection, nature conservation, and protection of sites with relevant biodiversity heritage.