



TIMORESE PATIENCE AND DETERMINATION PAYS OFF – NEW TREATY SET TO ESTABLISH PERMANENT MARITIME BOUNDARIES FOR THE FIRST TIME

Posted by Tom Clarke on February 27, 2018

East Timor's decision to drag the Australian Government to "compulsory conciliation" at the UN has paid off – a new and better treaty is set to be signed next week.

Timor Sea Justice Campaign spokesperson, Tom Clarke, said although the details remained under wraps, all the signs were suggesting that the Timorese are set to secure their permanent maritime boundaries and a fairer share of government revenues from the Greater Sunrise gas field.

"This outcome will be testament to the determination of the Timorese people and their governments to stand firm in the face of a neighbouring bully and claim their sovereign rights. This issue has never been about charity – it's about justice and what East Timor is entitled to under international law," said Mr Clarke.

The treaty is scheduled to be signed at United Nations headquarters in New York and will be witnessed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

"Unlike the old dodgy deals that the Australian Government jostled East Timor into, this new treaty is expected to actually establish permanent maritime boundaries for the first time. This is something the Timorese have been asking for since 2002. Instead successive Australian Governments have sought to short-change them at every opportunity," said Mr Clarke.

Recent media reports claim that the treaty will give a larger share of the government revenue from the Greater Sunrise field to East Timor – 80% if the gas is piped 450 km to Darwin for processing where Australia will reap the downstream economic benefits of jobs and related activities, or 70% if the gas is piped 150 km to East Timor.

"We're hoping there's not too much devil in the detail, but overall this treaty sounds like it will be a significant improvement. We should remember that in the original treaty regarding Greater Sunrise, the Australian Government offered Timor a miserly 18% of government revenue. Whereas under this new treaty, the Timorese could receive up to 80% of the revenue, so I think it's pretty safe to say that Timor's decision to stand up for its rights has been completely vindicated," said Mr Clarke.

The Timor Sea Justice Campaign is a grassroots campaign made up of concerned Australians of various backgrounds and political persuasions which held its first meeting in 2004 and has doggedly followed and sought to expose the dubious actions of successive Australian Governments.

"Over the years the Australian Government has tried every trick in the book to try to short-change our Timorese neighbours out of billions of dollars in oil and gas revenues. Fortunately, ordinary citizens have taken a stand each time to call out our Government's greed. We stood in solidarity with the Timorese people and we owe a big thanks to all the people who helped along the way – everyone who wrote letters to MPs, turned up to our protests, chipped in a few dollars here and there, and organised events at their schools, churches and in their communities. It's another example of the fantastic history of solidarity between the people of Australia and East Timor," said Mr Clarke.