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Press Release

Policy for the Timor-Leste Security Sector and Foreign Affairs

“Recommendations for the VIII Constitutional Government”

The National Strategic Development Plan (PEDN) 2011-2030 defines that the purpose of Timor-Leste’s development is to strengthen security and stability, establish institutions of the democratic state, recognizing that sustaining peace is the fundamental priority in order to realize the development and promotion of well-being for the Timorese people. These strategic guidelines reflect the challenges and threats of the contemporary environment, and based on this establish the missions of the Defence and Security forces, inclusive of their contributions to internal security and support for State foreign policy.

Timor-Leste produced a National Security Law in 2010 (Law No.2/2010) which has played a part in Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Timor-Leste. This law provides for the development of policy in line with legislation, yet such policy development has not yet occurred. FM has called on previous governments to development a National Security Policy, yet the VIII Constitutional Government has not included this in their program. The development of National Security Policy is critical for Timor-Leste in order to define the coordination of security actors for both internal security and external defence. Responding to security threats should be coordinated through a Integrated System for National Security (SISN) as stipulated under the 2010 National Security Law.

In regards to Defence, an ambitious intent document known as “Force 2020” was published in 2007, which formulated a strategic vision and development plan for the Timor-Leste Defence Force (F-FDTL). However, this document has no little relevance when considering Timor-Leste’s strategic environment. It aspires to military capabilities that are outside of Timor-Leste’s financial and human resources to implement and sustain. This report recommends that the Government undertakes a revision of Force 2020. The VIII Constitutional Government also has ambition to promote military conscription, yet fails to justify what this is in response to, nor how it will be implemented. If the VIII Constitutional Government wishes to realize this ambition, it requires the development of National Security and Defence Policy beforehand. The development of Defence Policy is critical here, as it would define the Timor-Leste’s strategic interests, analyze the risks and threats in its strategic environment and develop clear Defence objectives for the F-FDTL to meet, allowing for long-term force structure development and planning.

Timor-Leste also needs to define a clear Foreign Affairs policy, which would clearly define Timor-Leste's national interests and how they can be promoted and protected as well as determining which States Timor-Leste should strengthen its relationships with. This policy also needs to be aligned with defence, security and economic policy. At this time, Timor-Leste also has strong ambitions to join ASEAN and has begun the process for joining ASEAN, yet this has not yet been approved. The VIII Constitutional Government has also expressed the desire for Timor-Leste to join the Commonwealth of Nations without providing any information as to why this would be of benefit to the State.

Finally, regarding the Strategic Concept for Defence and National Security (KEDSN), the VIII Constitutional Government is content with the KEDSN as a guide to orient policy. Yet the KEDSN is not clear in providing guidance which will adversely affect its implementation. The objective of this document is to establish the fundamental aspects of the global strategy that should be adopted by the State inclusive of National Security and Defence Policy. Whilst the KEDSN may be used to guide the development of these policies, this has to be realized in Timor-Leste.

Recommendations

1. The Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation allocate funding to the development of National Security, Defence and Foreign Affairs policy
2. The Prime Minister establishes a Working Group comprised of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior to coordinate this policy development
3. The VIII Constitutional Government, in particular the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior begin discussions aimed at ensuring that this policy development aligns with the Strategic Concept for Defence and National Security

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