

## Timor-Leste Holds First Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Border Management



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**Dili – This week (03-02)**, the Immigration Service of Timor-Leste and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) jointly organized the first inter-agency meeting to facilitate coordination and information sharing among government agencies involved in immigration and border management.

Timor-Leste is characterized by dynamic migration flows, as a result of steadily expanding trade and investment, tourism, as well as labour and student mobility. While migration offers great potential to promote economic growth and social development, one of the challenges is ensuring the right balance between open, but at the same time secured and controlled borders.

As COVID-19 reshapes the immigration and border management landscape, there is an increasing need for more comprehensive and integrated approaches to enhance movement management at borders, prevent irregular migration, and combat transnational organized crimes.

The inter-agency meeting was chaired by Luis Soares Barreto, the Director-General of Immigration Service and attended by 11 border agencies involved in immigration and border management including: Immigration Service, Custom Service, Border Patrol Units (Land and Maritime), Police (Criminal Investigation Unit), Airport Authority, Quarantine Service, Interpol Desk/Scientific Criminal Investigation Unit, Secretary of State for Vocational Training, Employment and Policy, as well as Ministries of Justice and Education.

The inter-agency working group provides a platform for government agencies involved in immigration and border management to identify needs and shape interventions. During the meeting, the participants shared good practices, challenges they are currently facing, as well as suggested priority areas that can be jointly addressed.

In particular, the meeting highlighted the importance of enhancing cooperation and improving border management policies and structures to respond more effectively to continuously evolving migration challenges.

“The meeting showcased a good example of Integrated Border Management approach and provided an excellent opportunity to bring together all relevant border management institutions to discuss on issues of common concerns. As we as border agencies are facing a myriad of challenges that requires further coordination, we look forward to having more fruitful discussions on a regular basis,” said Director-General Barreto.

“The establishment of the Inter-agency coordination group is very timely. An effective coordination mechanism among immigration and border management agencies is required more than ever - not only to address the current border management challenges but also to prepare the country to effectively respond to emerging issues and future ones arising from the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic,” said Cecilia McIntosh, Officer in Charge at IOM Timor-Leste.

The meeting was organized as part of the project *Strengthening Immigration and Border Management in Timor-Leste (SIBM)*, funded through the IOM Development Fund. The outcome of the meeting will feed into the development of the IBM National Action Plan and the SOP to improve the coordination among border agencies, to be supported by the SIBM project.

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