

The Maritime Boundary Office is the Secretariat for the Council for the Final Delimitation of Maritime Boundaries, which is responsible for the negotiation of permanent maritime boundaries with Indonesia and Australia.



Maritime Boundary Office

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Socialising the Maritime Boundary Treaty

Following the signing of the Maritime Boundary Treaty between Timor-Leste and Australia at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 6 March 2018, the MBO has been sharing information about the conciliation process and the Maritime Boundary Treaty, in Timor-Leste and internationally.

New Frontiers: Timor-Leste's Historic Conciliation on Maritime Boundaries

The MBO published a book revealing Timor-Leste's experience of the first ever compulsory conciliation process under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that led to the signing of the new Maritime Boundary Treaty, and a new chapter in Timor-Leste's pursuit of full sovereignty. The book has been produced in Portuguese, English and Tetun. H.E Chief Negotiator Xanana Gusmão launched the book at the Timorese Resistance and Archive Museum on 30 August 2018 – the 19th anniversary of Timor-Leste's independence referendum, and the one year anniversary of the breakthrough in-principle maritime boundary agreement signed in Copenhagen. The book was also launched by the Chief Negotiator in Lisbon, Portugal on 19 October.

Timor-Leste's Maritime Boundaries Short Film

The MBO produced a short film outlining the compulsory conciliation process that led to the Maritime Boundary Treaty with Australia. The film was broadcast on television and social media. It was also played at the Platinum Cineplex at Timor Plaza. Cinema Lorosae is currently showing the film around the country; it has been played to audiences in Suai, Ainaro, Manu Fahi, Aileu, Bobonaro, Ermera and Dili.



"We are here to celebrate international law" – Chief Negotiator Xanana Gusmão, 30 August 2018

Socialising the Maritime Boundary Treaty (cont)

International engagement

H.E Chief Negotiator Xanana Gusmão met with the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres on 24 April to discuss the signing of the historic Maritime Boundary Treaty between Timor-Leste and Australia. Following this meeting, the CEO of the MBO, Elizabeth Exposto and a small delegation visited Washington D.C. to attend a series of meetings with members of Congress or their staff to provide updates on the maritime boundary conciliation and to thank the Members for their support throughout the journey.



Other MBO briefings

The MBO continues to provide briefings to civil society, members of government, students and international visitors. On 21 August a study tour group from Australia attended the MBO for a short briefing on the Timor Sea: its history, the compulsory conciliation proceedings and the significance of the new Maritime Boundary Treaty to Timor-Leste and Australia. Participants found the sessions informative and conveyed their best wishes to the negotiating team and to Timor-Leste for its future development.

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Timor-Leste also requested a briefing on 25 September at the MBO.

Students from different universities also visited the MBO seeking answers to their queries relating to the new and permanent boundaries in the Timor Sea.



JICA team with MBO team

Transitional arrangements

The Maritime Boundary Treaty between Timor-Leste and Australia will take effect once it has been ratified by both countries. The governments of Timor-Leste and Australia are actively pursuing ratification efforts. This involves the development of new domestic legislation, which is currently being finalised. Under the terms of the Treaty, petroleum activities in the Timor Sea will continue under conditions consistent with the previous arrangements. 'Transitional arrangements' for existing operations and affected companies have progressed well, with negotiations between some companies essentially completed and negotiations with the remainder well advanced.

Indonesia

Now that maritime boundaries between Timor-Leste and Australia have been settled, the MBO continues its work to support a resolution of maritime boundaries with Indonesia, consistent with UNCLOS and international law. H.E Chief Negotiator Xanana Gusmão led a strategy meeting with the MBO and Timor-Leste's legal and technical team in September. This meeting was to prepare for preliminary meeting with Indonesia on maritime boundaries in December, with formal negotiations to begin in early 2019.

IPG Geoscience Conference

H.E Chief Negotiator Xanana Gusmão was invited to address the Institute of Petroleum and Geology (IPG) 4th International Conference on 24th October, 2018 at the Dili Convention Centre. In his remarks, the Chief Negotiator stated that Timor-Leste now has an even greater opportunity to grow its resource potential due to the recent success establishing maritime boundaries with Australia. The Maritime Boundary Treaty has unlocked access to vast maritime resources in the Timor Sea. He also said that Timor-Leste's future will be shaped by how we manage and utilise our own resources, and that geoscience and IPG will play a fundamental role in discovering and managing the resources for current and future generations.



International conference on Timor-Leste Geological Resources Data and Information for Economic Diversification and Development, 24 October 2018

American Council of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL) exchange

Based on the Memorandum of Understanding agreed between ACYPL and the Timor-Leste Government, the MBO worked with ACYPL and the U.S. Embassy in Dili to facilitate the first delegation from Timor-Leste to visit the United States on exchange from 13 May to 2 June 2018.

The six delegates met with leaders from the federal, state and local government, as well as representatives from business and civil society. The delegation gained personal insights into the governmental systems of Washington D.C.; Massachusetts: Boston; Rhode Island: Providence, Central Falls, Newport; and Wyoming: Cheyenne.

The three weeks' trip concluded with a Professional Fellows Congress, which involved young and inspiring leaders from more than 60 countries.

The Timor-Leste delegation were grateful for the opportunity to participate in the ACYPL exchange program. The key message from this experience, as noted by the delegation, was that countries should prioritise their agendas in a transparent manner, based on the needs of their people.

Following the success of this visit, the U.S. Government announced that Timor-Leste would be included in the Professional Fellowship Program, an intensive 6 week fellowship exchange program that has previously only been available to ASEAN member countries.



Looking at the old map of Dili with Mr. Ta-Moore in the Library of Congress of the Southeast Asian Collection in Washington D.C., 17 May 2018



Farewell Reception at the US Department of State Benjamin Franklin Dining Room, 01 June 2018

American Environmental delegation visit

The MBO hosted a delegation of environmental experts visiting Timor-Leste from the United States. The delegation included a conservation specialist from the PEW Charity Trust, an independent NGO focused on protecting the world's marine environment. PEW is considering extending their funding to create additional Marine Protected Areas and Timor-Leste is one of the potential countries being considered. Dr. Sandra Whitehouse is a world renowned environmental expert who has visited Timor-Leste previously as part of an Atlantic Council delegation. The delegation also included a photo-journalist from the National Geographic magazine who was documenting the spectacular marine beauty of Timor-Leste. The delegation gave a lecture to university students at Uma Amerika at UNTL on plastics and the importance of environmental policies to protect marine life.



Atauro Island, photo by Andy Mann, National Geographic

Our Ocean Conference, Bali 2018

H.E Chief Negotiator Xanana Gusmão delivered a speech as part of a high-level panel on maritime security at the Our Ocean Conference in Bali on 29 October. The Our Ocean Conference was established by former United States Secretary of State John Kerry in 2014 and is now a global event that brings together stakeholders from governments, the commercial sector, scientific communities and civil society to discuss and commit to actionable activities that will protect the world's oceans. Whilst the Conference is focused on ocean conservation and protection, it also highlights the importance of maritime security to these issues. The Chief Negotiator was invited to address the issue of jurisdiction and the relationship between the establishment of maritime boundaries to enhance accountability and responsibility and the effective management of resources. The Chief Negotiator

spoke about Timor-Leste's success using the conciliation mechanism under UNCLOS to settle maritime boundaries with Australia, and also launched Timor-Leste's proposal to establish an independent trust fund to assist developing countries resolve their maritime disputes.



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