

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.

United Nations Compulsory Conciliation

The maritime boundary dispute between Timor-Leste and Australia has been in conciliation, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) since April 2016. Since then, there have been multiple meetings in The Hague, Singapore, Washington, D.C and Copenhagen.

On 30 August 2017, during conciliation meetings in Copenhagen, Timor-Leste and Australia reached agreement in principle on a comprehensive maritime boundary agreement. This date has historic significance for Timor-Leste as it marks the 18th anniversary of the referendum which led to Timor-Leste's independence. In addition to delimiting maritime boundaries, the Copenhagen agreement addresses the legal status of the Greater Sunrise gas field, the establishment of a Special Regime for the development of Greater Sunrise, a pathway to the development of the resource, and arrangements for how the resulting revenue will be shared.

Following meetings at The Hague from 9 to 13 October, the PCA announced that Timor-Leste and Australia had reached agreement on the complete text of a draft treaty. The Commission will schedule more meetings in the coming months.



(L-R) H.E. Chief Negotiator Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, Mr. John Reid, Chairman, Ambassador Peter Taksøe-Jensen, H.E. Agent Agio Pereira, Mr. Gary Quinlan. Photo Credit: Mr. Todd Quinn

Round Table Discussion with Judge Rapoza

On 13 July 2017, Judge Rapoza led a roundtable discussion to more than 30 young diplomats at the MNEC on the rule of law as a guiding principle for a well-organised society.

Judge Philip Rapoza served in the legal professional for more than 35 years and was the Chief of the Massachusetts Appeals Court until he retired in 2005. From 2003 to 2005 he served as an international judge and the coordinator of the special panels for serious crimes in Timor-Leste, dealing with crimes against humanity and other serious offenses. Since then he has returned several times back to Timor-Leste to assist with efforts to develop the country's justice sector.

In his presentation he shared his knowledge about the importance of an independent judiciary and the separation of powers in a State. Furthermore, Judge Rapoza also talked about the significance of laws both domestic and international in promoting the development and social harmony in Timor-Leste.



Judge Rapoza with the young diplomats



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Visits to the United States of America

MBO

A delegation from the MBO visited the United States from 30 July to 15 August 2017, as part of the Timor-Leste Government's continuing United States engagement strategy on maritime boundaries. The Timor-Leste team met with members of the United States Congress and their staff, members of the Portuguese American Caucus and communities, and international non-governmental organisations.

The primary purpose of the visit was to build awareness of the National Defence Authorisation Act - a bill that outlines America's major defence and security priorities and includes a reference to the Timor-Leste maritime boundary dispute with Australia. The team provided updates to Congress on the maritime boundary conciliation process.



(L-R) Ms. Adelsia da Silva, MBO Junior Legal Adviser; Ms. Elizabeth Exposto, MBO CEO; Ms. Natercia Coelho da Silva, Deputy Head of Mission of Timor-Leste Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Chief Negotiator Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão

Chief Negotiator Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão visited the United States from 16 to 23 September, as part of the Timor-Leste Government's continuing United States engagement strategy on maritime boundaries.

As part of the Chief Negotiator's visit to New York for the United Nations General Assembly and g7+ side events, the MBO organised participation and attendance at numerous events on the margins of the official proceedings. In addition to events with think tanks, CPLP Ambassadors and other key supporters in New York, the Chief Negotiator participated in several community events with the Portuguese American community in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.



(L-R) The Honorable David Cicilline, Representative of Rhode Island; H.E. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, Chief Negotiator; and The Honorable James Diossa, Mayor of Central Falls; at the Portuguese-American community leaders lunch in Central Falls, Rhode Island

MBO Briefings

The MBO continued to brief organisations, community and religious groups and civil society on Timor-Leste's pursuit of maritime boundaries and the progress of the conciliation proceedings with Australia.

On 23 October 2017, MBO gave a lecture to students of International Relations from the Social Science Department at Universidade Nasional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL).

On 29 August 2017, the MBO briefed the delegation of diplomats attending the 72nd United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York and other young diplomats, directors and former ambassadors at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.

On 17 August 2017, Ms. Kirsty Sword Gusmão brought a group visiting from Australia to the MBO for a briefing on the conciliation proceedings with Australia.

Each group raised important questions and were interested in the process of conciliation and how the outcome would impact the future development of Timor-Leste.

(Top) Briefing to the young diplomats at Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, (centre) briefing to UNTL students, and (below) briefing to a team from Australia



MBO capacity building

MBO organised training for select staff in areas relevant to their expertise.

On 2-21 July 2017, the Junior Legal Adviser participated in the prestigious Rhodes Academy of Ocean Law and Policy in Greece, sponsored through the Centre of International Law of National University of Singapore.

The 44 participants explored the detail of the United Nations Conventions on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and its challenges. Participants sat writing and oral exams, assessed by internationally renowned judges Judge Jin-Hyun Paik, Judge Rüdiger Wolfrum, Judge Vladimir Golitsyn and Judge Baron Hoffmann. The MBO Junior Legal Adviser scored the highest of the group for the oral examination.

On 5 July-1 August 2017, the Communications and Translations Officer attended the Summer Institute on Linguistics Research in Kentucky, United States. The Institute was co-sponsored by the Linguistics Society of America and University of Kentucky. The Institute provided specialized intensive and advance training in linguistics.

On 31 July-11 August 2017, the Geotechnical Officer and Executive Officer participated in a study exchange to Lisbon and Torres Novas in Portugal. They learned about the duties and powers of the municipality and the operations of the Geographical Information System of the municipality, including how urban data is analysed. They also learned that Torres Novas is the sister city of Manatuto municipality in Timor-Leste.

On 28 August-8 September 2017, the Operations Manager, Finance and Accounting Officer and Administrative and Finance Officer participated in a study exchange at the town halls of Lisbon and Torres Novas. The team exchanged ideas and strengthened their understanding of finance, especially in areas of accounting, contract management, procurement management, and the rules and regulations that govern budget execution.

On 16-29 September 2017, the Finance and Logistics Officer, Procurement and Contract Management Officer, Administrative and Procurement Officer and Logistics and Transportation Officer went to Jakarta, Indonesia for a short training course on procurement. They learned about vendor selection, goods and services, government values and trusts. They also improved their knowledge in customer service, negotiation, problem solving, and communication skills.

The MBO will continue to invest in its local staff for the development of Timor-Leste.



Award ceremony for candidates scored highest for writing and oral examination with Judge Baron Hoffmann (left) and Judge Rüdiger Wolfrum (right)



Morphology class with Professor Andrea Sims (left) of Ohio State University at University of Kentucky. Photo Credit: Prof A. Sims



MBO staff with staff from Lisbon Town Hall Human Resource Department



Exchange of information on finance at Lisbon Town Hall with Mrs. Paula Reis Costa, Director of Finance



MBO staff with Mr. Fauzi Hasan (centre), the Lead Trainer for procurement negotiation techniques



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