

## Press Release

### Timor-Leste's Submission at ITLOS Advisory Proceeding On Climate Change

On 20 September 2020, Timor-Leste appeared before the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), in Hamburg, Germany, in a historic advisory proceeding on the Advisory Opinion Concerning States Obligation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), on Climate Change.

Representing Timor-Leste, was the Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister and CEO of the Land and Maritime Boundary Office, Ms. Elizabeth Exposto, Legal Counsel the Honourable Former Justice John Middleton AM KC, and Legal Counsel Eran Sthoeger Esquire.

“The ocean is integral to our way of life. As a small island State, Timor-Leste is supportive of small States utilising international law to have their voices heard.

Even though we are not all equally responsible for the pressures placed on the environment, particularly our oceans, we will all suffer from these pressures,” said Ms Exposto in her submission.

She highlighted also, it is the intention of the new Timor-Leste government to transform natural wealth of the country found in its soils and seas, into food security, health, productivity, and job opportunities for the Timorese.

“Timor-Leste is also prioritising the development of a Timor-Leste Blue Economy Policy for the sustainable growth of the Nation, including the preservation, conservation and sustainable use of our ocean resources and the promotion of initiatives and programmes aimed at environmental, economic and social sustainability,” she added.

In his intervention, the Honourable Former Justice John Middleton, emphasised three key matters of law. First, that States like Timor-Leste have a right to develop their natural resources in accordance with their right to protect and preserve the marine environment. Second, that least developed States like Timor-Leste have a right to development. Third, that ITLOS must apply the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities to the relevant obligations of States under UNCLOS.

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He added that according to UNCLOS Article 197, States have the duty to cooperate, and that when formulating international standards to protect the environment, these must take ‘*into account regional features*’. As such, countries like Timor-Leste with lesser capacities will need the assistance from developed States.

“The community of States cannot leave developing States behind. Developing States deserve the same opportunities that have been afforded to developed States, to develop their resources for the benefit of their people,” said Honourable Former Justice Middleton on behalf of Timor-Leste.

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*The full speeches of the Timor-Leste submission at ITLOS are available here:*

Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister and CEO of the Land and Maritime Boundary Office, Ms. Elizabeth Exposto - [Speech \(English\)](#)

Honourable Former Justice John Middleton AM KC - [Speech \(English\)](#)



**Photo caption (from right to left):** Honourable Former Justice John Middleton AM KC, Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister and CEO of the Land and Maritime Boundary Office, Ms. Elizabeth Exposto, Legal Counsel Eran Sthoeger Esquire.

**Credit:** ITLOS photo.

# Gabinete das Fronteiras Terrestres e Marítimas



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Credit: ITLOS photos