

TIMOR-LESTE'S LAND BOUNDARIES WITH INDONESIA

Timor-Leste and Indonesia enjoy a strong bilateral relationship and cooperation across a broad range of areas. The two countries provide a global model for reconciliation and constructive friendship. Timor-Leste and Indonesia share the island of Timor: Indonesia to the west and Timor-Leste to the east as well as the enclave of Oe-Cusse Ambeno. As the island is shared it is necessary to define the land boundary between the two countries.



What happened in the past? / What has been agreed upon by the two States?

Soon after the restoration of Timor-Leste's independence on 20 May 2002, Timor-Leste and Indonesia began discussing their land boundaries. It was agreed that the land boundary would be demarcated based on the 1904 Convention between the Netherlands and Portugal on Demarcation of Portuguese and Dutch Dominions on the Island of Timor and other relevant legal documents. This approach reflects established international law and the principle of *uti possidetis juris*, under which newly independent states retain their prior colonial boundaries as international borders. This principle ensures stability and legal certainty.

On 8 April 2005 a Provisional Agreement on the Land Boundaries was signed which settled most of the boundary. An Addendum to the Provisional Agreement was later signed in 2013 to formalise the resolution of additional areas.

Who is leading the land boundary negotiations with Indonesia?

In accordance with Decree-Law No. 87/2023 of 19 December establishing the Land and Maritime Boundary Office (LMBO), negotiations on the remaining unresolved land boundary segments are led by the Prime Minister, with the LMBO providing the necessary legal and technical assistance.

What is the status of land boundary negotiations with Indonesia?

Currently, two land boundary segments remain unresolved, Bidjael Sunan–Oben and Noel Besi–Citrana.

Under the leadership of H.E. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, the process of discussions with Indonesia have included the following formal meetings:

- The inauguration of the first meeting of Senior Officials' Consultation (SOC) was held in Bali in 2015, with the second meeting held in Dili and the third meeting held in Bandung;
- On 29 April – 15 May 2019, a Joint Field Visit was conducted to delineate the Bidjael Sunan-Oben segment and survey the Noel Besi/ Citrana Segment;
- On 4 and 5 February 2020, H.E. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão met with the Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, H.E. Mohammad Mahfud MD, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, H.E. Retno Marsudi, in Jakarta, to confirm and strengthen both countries' commitment to finalise the land boundary delimitation;
- In 2023 and 2024, two Special SOC meetings were held with the objective of concluding the demarcation of the remaining unresolved land boundary segments;
- On 21 October 2024, the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, H.E. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, and the President of Indonesia, H.E. Prabowo Subianto, also discussed the resolution of the outstanding land boundary issues.

What needs to be achieved by the two states?

Before the land boundary can be finalised there are some remaining areas that need to be resolved. These segments have complex characteristics or features that require further detailed discussions.

In addition to the finalisation of boundary demarcation, the two nations are also engaging in discussions on special arrangements to ensure the continuity of social, cultural and economic ties between the bordering communities in these unresolved segments.

Both Timor-Leste and Indonesia continue to work together towards finalisation of the land boundary demarcation.