



## PRESS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**28 July 2008**

### **PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF JUSTICE LAUNCH THE NATIONAL PROPERTY CADASTRE**

*Official data to be collected on land ownership in Timor-Leste*

The Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, the American Ambassador and other esteemed guests today participated in the launching of Timor-Leste's National Property Cadastre at the National Directorate for Land, Property and Cadastral Services (DNTPSC), Balide, Dili.

The National Property Cadastre will be a comprehensive database of claims to land ownership, and could eventually form the basis for a national registry of land rights in the country.

The creation of the National Property Cadastre was authorized by a Ministerial Decree that sets the legal basis for a systematic collection of data on land and land ownership across the country. This data collection will be undertaken with support from the USAID-funded "Ita Nia Rai" project, a five-year, \$10 million dollar initiative that aims to record claims to land ownership across the country for the purpose of land registration and land administration.

"The IV Constitutional Government has taken on the responsibility of solving definitively the issue of cadastre and property in Timor-Leste," said Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao on the occasion. "We will protect Timorese citizens by promoting [...] property rights and developing mechanisms for attracting and promoting foreign investment," he added.

"The Decree on the Cadastre authorizes the National Directorate for Land, Property and Cadastral Services (DNTPSC) to begin collecting information about land in a systematic way, according to a pre-determined geographic order," commented the Minister of Justice, Lucia Lobato. Antonio Verdial de Sousa, the Director of DNTPSC, added: "This data collection will begin in 2 pilot areas, in the cities of Liquica and Manatuto. Once the technical process has been tested, the data collection will be expanded to other districts of Timor-Leste".

The Decree on the Cadastre, N. 229/2008, sets the standards for this data collection and also states that the collection will be preceded by public information campaigns. All information collected will be publicly displayed locally, nationally and internationally for no less than 30 days to allow individuals and communities to verify the results.

#### **STRENGTHENING PROPERTY RIGHTS IN TIMOR-LESTE Balide, Dili, Timor-Leste**

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“The creation of a national cadastre is a significant step in the life of a new nation, and the American Government is proud to be a part of this process,” commented US Ambassador Mr. Hans G. Klemm. “We will continue to support the Government of Timor-Leste to create a transparent land administration system which will benefit all Timorese citizens”, he added.

Formalizing property rights is a key step in Timor-Leste’s struggle to reduce poverty, as it can open the way to private sector investment, and help men, women and families to access to rural credit. In addition, the Government hopes that a public land demarcation process will help to increase stability and reduce future conflicts over land.

“In view of this great commitment [to strengthen property rights], please allow me to thank the entire team,” said Prime Minister Gusmao. He also thanked the US Government and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for their efforts. “The United States has always been present in the attempt to develop this project,” he said.

*Strengthening Property Rights in Timor-Leste (known locally as the “Ita Nia Rai” or “Our Land” program) is a five-year program funded by USAID and implemented by ARD Inc., ACDI/VOCA and Land Equity International, organizations with worldwide experience in developing land systems in post-conflict countries. Working with the DNTPSC and the Ministry of Justice, the program provides technical and policy support to develop a sustainable and transparent property rights system in Timor-Leste.*

- Ends

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