

**PRESS RELEASE****Conciliation between
the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Commonwealth of Australia**

WASHINGTON, 3 April 2017

Timor-Leste and Australia Continue Discussions with Conciliation Committee in Maritime Boundary Proceedings

Delegations from both Timor-Leste and Australia held a series of confidential meetings with the Conciliation Commission in Washington, D.C. during the week of 26-31 March 2017. These meetings are part of an ongoing, structured dialogue in the context of the conciliation between the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (“**Timor-Leste**”) and the Commonwealth of Australia (“**Australia**”) being conducted pursuant to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and under the auspices of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (the “**PCA**”). These meetings will continue in an effort to resolve the differences between the two states over maritime boundaries in the Timor Sea.

Over the course of the week, the Commission met with the Parties to explore their negotiating positions and seek to identify possible areas of agreement. These meetings built on previous meetings between the Commission and the Parties that took place in Singapore in October 2016 and January 2017.

Both the Parties and the Commission agreed that the meetings were productive, and reaffirmed their commitment to work towards the eventual conclusion of an agreement on maritime boundaries. “These are difficult issues for any State, and I am very pleased with how the Parties have approached the meetings,” said Ambassador Peter Taksøe-Jensen, the Chairman of the Commission. “At the same time, conciliation is a marathon, not a sprint, and we still have work to do. The Commission is not here to decide the Parties’ dispute, but to help them find an agreement that is both fair and achievable, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. We will continue to meet with the Parties with that goal in mind.”

Next Steps

A number of further meetings between the Parties and the Commission are expected to take place over the course of this year. The Commission will conduct future meetings in a confidential setting in order to provide an environment conducive to facilitating the eventual success of the conciliation, although further joint public statements may be made from time to time.

Background on the Conciliation Process

The Commission was constituted on 25 June 2016 pursuant to the procedure set out in Annex V of the Convention. The five-member Commission is chaired by H.E. Ambassador Peter Taksøe-Jensen (Denmark). The other members of the Commission are Dr. Rosalie Balkin (Australia), Judge Abdul G. Koroma (Sierra Leone), Professor Donald McRae (Canada and New Zealand), and Judge Rüdiger Wolfrum (Germany). With the agreement of the Parties, the Permanent Court of Arbitration acts as Registry in the proceedings.

These conciliation proceedings were initiated by Timor-Leste on 11 April 2016 by way of a “Notification Instituting Conciliation under Section 2 of Annex V of UNCLOS” addressed to Australia.

On 2 May 2016, Australia submitted “Australia’s Response to the Notice of Conciliation”.

On 28 July 2016, the Conciliation Commission held a procedural meeting with the Parties at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the Netherlands.

On 29, 30, and 31 August, the Commission convened the Opening Session of the Conciliation and a Hearing on Competence at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the Netherlands.

On 19 September 2016, the Commission rendered its Decision on Competence, finding that the Conciliation would continue.

From 10 to 13 October 2016, the Commission met with the Parties in Singapore.

On 9 January 2017, the Foreign Ministers of Timor-Leste and Australia, together with the Commission, issued a Trilateral Joint Statement on the termination of the *Treaty on Certain Maritime Arrangements in the Timor Sea*.

From 16 to 20 January 2017, the Commission met with the Parties in Singapore.

Further information about the case may be found at www.pcacases.com/web/view/132, including the full text of the Commission's Decision on Competence, earlier Press Releases, a video recording and transcript of the Opening Session, the presentations of the Parties, and previous press releases and Trilateral Joint Statements.

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Background on the Permanent Court of Arbitration

The Permanent Court of Arbitration is an intergovernmental organization established by the 1899 Hague Convention on the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes. The PCA has 121 Member States. Headquartered at the Peace Palace in The Hague, the Netherlands, the PCA facilitates arbitration, conciliation, fact-finding, and other dispute resolution proceedings among various combinations of States, State entities, intergovernmental organizations, and private parties. The PCA's International Bureau is currently administering 6 interstate disputes, 75 investor-State arbitrations, and 41 cases arising under contracts involving a State or other public entity. More information about the PCA can be found at www.pca-cpa.org.

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