

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA**

**Intersessional one-day consultation on mental health and human rights,**

**15 November 2021**

Panel I: (10:00 to 12:00 CET): Exploring and sharing positive experiences in reforming mental health systems guided by a human rights-based approach in order to move from practice to policy.

Madam President,

Timor-Leste welcomes this consultation on mental health and human rights and thanks the distinguished speakers and panellists for their remarks.

The pandemic we face showed us how important is to protect mental health and to provide the necessary facilities for persons struggling to cope with the adaptation to a new normal. The fear of contracting the disease, the lack of contact with friends and family and the overall changing of the lifestyle have had terrible consequences for the mental health of our citizens, in particular to vulnerable persons, children, young adults and elderly.

Timor-Leste remains committed to keeping human rights at the centre of all its policies and mental health is no exception. Indeed, it must be stressed that the right to health is a cross-cutting right and without the protection of this right other human rights cannot be fully realized.

With that in mind, last year, Timor-Leste launched its first-ever telephone hotline dedicated to mental health, an initiative that is part of the response and recovery measures to the COVID-19 crisis. It shall be noted that this hotline also provides information and over-the-phone support for other health issues such as maternal, new-born care and nutrition.

In conclusion, I wish to seize this opportunity to share in today’s consultation that the Government of Timor-Leste has designed a strategy specifically for the mental health sector and is committed to:

* Improving access to health facilities and treatment for all people with mental illness,
* Providing care facilities at referral hospitals for mental health patients,
* Introducing a comprehensive multi-disciplinary team of psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, psychologists and mental health technical professionals who are appropriately skilled and have reached specific standards of training, and
* Increasing community awareness and understanding of mental illness through advocacy, education and promotion.

I thank you.