Anti-Austerity Bloc Ousts Portugal's Center-Right Government

Lisbon, November 11 (RHC)-- A leftist alliance has toppled Portugal's center-right government, paving the ground for a Socialist-led administration to bring an end to years of austerity measures.

On Tuesday, the alliance, which comprises the moderate Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the radical Left Bloc, rejected the government's austerity programs for a second consecutive term in office, with 123 lawmakers voting against the policy in the country's 230-seat parliament.

The vote was the first of its kind against an elected government since the end of dictatorship in Portugal in 1974. Portuguese Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho's center-right coalition, which lost its absolute majority in Portugal's October 4th general election, was sworn back into office late last month.

Socialist Party leader Antonio Costa is set to become the Portuguese prime minister in coming weeks. The leftist alliance has pledged to spend more on the national health service and reverse cuts in pay, pensions and public services, as well as tax increases.

When Coelho came to power in June 2011, Portugal was on the brink of defaulting on its debt, while his Socialist predecessor, Jose Socrates, had asked for a 78 billion euro (USD 88 billion) bailout from the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

However, Portugal exited the bailout scheme in May 2014 due to harsh austerity measures and increased taxes, returning to growth after three years of recession.

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