

English Translation of La'ó Hamutuk / TVE Interview with António da Conceicao 'Kalohan', 7th March 2017

The following translation is based on an edited transcript by La'ó Hamutuk of the recorded interview.

Juvinal: Welcome to D Challenge, produced by collaboration between La'ó Hamutuk and Education Television. Here in the studio we have a special guest, candidate for President of the Republic no.8, Dr. António da Conceicao 'Kalohan'. Good evening, candidate.

Kalohan: Good evening.

Juvinal: Welcome to the TVE studio. We will have three segments in this exclusive interview. The first segment will discuss your personal vision, the second will discuss politics, democracy, human rights and justice, and the final segment will discuss the economy. Candidate, the President of your party said yesterday that candidate Kalohan is a resource which the Democratic Party offers to the people of Timor-Leste to become President of the Republic. My question is this: what is your strategic vision which will help Timor-Leste over the next five years?

Kalohan: Thanks to TVE and to La'ó Hamutuk for organizing this debate. As a citizen of Timor-Leste, I think that all of us are responsible for this country, and I believe that I also have a responsibility to contribute to the governing of the country and to build the nation. Because of this, I present myself as a candidate with the political intention and strategic vision which I think we are already arriving at, to build a new Timor for all Timorese. I also think that the resources which exist in our land should be used to benefit all Timorese.

Juvinal: How can you describe this vision to use Timor's resources for the people in a more concrete way?

Kalohan: Today we are in the post-conflict phase and constructing the nation, so Timor-Leste should become a space for all Timorese. We need to promote national unity between Timorese. This is a very important concept because we struggled for independence for a long time, and there were many victims who gave their lives for this country. Therefore with this concept I intend to dignify all Timorese, and at the same time recognize and valorize our heroes, the people who died. The political conviction which the nation's founders dreamed for Timor-Leste, independence is not something abstract, it's reality. Therefore I think that if we already have this dream, our resources need to be used to contribute to our socio-economic development to bring wellbeing to all Timorese.

Juvinal: Candidate, you say that you are a better candidate than others. What is the difference between your vision compared to that of other candidates?

Kalohan: After PD decided to present a candidate, we reflected deeply. I think that we have emerged from a long conflict, entered into the process of building the nation, and the new generation need to continue this struggle, no longer an armed struggle but one of thinking, strategy. So I think that I am a good alternative because since 2002 until today, the style of

government has not changed. We need to end one period to begin a new process, and therefore I think that I can present an alternative to the people, as can the other candidates. Perhaps they are better than me, but I affirm that I am a good candidate.

Juvinal: You talk about a candidate's alternative ideas, but of course these cannot diverge from the Constitution of the Republic. Out of all the President's duties, which is your biggest priority?

Kalohan: From my reflections on the President's mandate, beginning from President Xanana who made his priority the guarantee of Timor-Leste's political stability and reconciliation between Timorese, and thus how we can leave our past behind us and move forward. Then I observed President Ramos-Horta also offered alternatives to resolving the conflict we faced in 2006, so the two Presidents acted according to each's context. I also see that current President Taur Matan Ruak believed that, after ten years of independence, the lives of our population have hardly improved, so the President began to take on the duty of representing the voice of the people.

Juvinal: So the participation of the people is your priority – how to bring the state closer to the people?

Kalohan: I also think that because the President is elected by the people, he must be a spokesperson and advocate for the people. Therefore I must fulfil this duty as President to give a voice to those without a voice, and I can also shout when I need to shout.

Juvinal: Some media have reported that when you were a Minister, you gave scholarships to your children. People consider this as corruption or nepotism. Can you explain, is this information true or not?

Kalohan: I have to give my declaration to the public because this also relates to my dignity as someone in government. I have one daughter who received a scholarship from the Timor-Leste Government, but she received it while I was Minister for Commerce. My daughter finished her studies at Sao José School and began her studies at the National University of Timor-Lorosa'e. Sao Jose is an excellent school, and I believe that this school offers a highly quality education, and my daughter competed and was awarded a scholarship.

Then about the other accusations which say that I gave scholarships to my other two children, one studying in Portugal and the other in the Philippines. This accusation is false, and happened during the time I have stood as a candidate for President, so this an attempted character assassination to prevent me from standing. Regarding my son Fidalgo, the government of Portugal offered twelve Bachelor's scholarships, and he submitted his application while I was on mission in Mozambique. I then returned from Mozambique and transited through Portugal, and my son went there along with the other students, and I met him there.

Juvinal: So you consider that he received the scholarship through the normal process?

Kalohan: The normal process which was offered to my son, yes his father was a Minister but he is a Timorese citizen, and has the same rights as other children to take advantage of the available opportunities. I did not see any favouritism, because it was not me that gave it, but the Timor-Leste government.

Juvinal: As a father, what do you feel when these accusations are made?

Kalohan: I feel sad about this kind of situation when I see that many members of government, many members of Parliament, if this situation befell another member of government would there be a possibility of this happening, or not? Or are people just quiet about this kind of activity, but then just accuse me later on when I run as a candidate for President. This is a political obstacle which some people are putting in place to block me, even though I am offering myself to the nation. But these accusations discriminate against Timorese citizens, people in government are excluded, that is to say that children whose parents are Ministers or Parliamentarians don't have the same rights as other citizens.

Juvinal: The Constitution lays out the principle of separation of powers. If you are elected, how will you serve as a check-and-balance to other state organs?

Kalohan: We have to respect our Constitution; we chose a system which includes the principle of separation of power between state organs. And this brings us to the question, what is good governance? When we separate the functions of the President, Government, Parliament and judiciary, these organs can fulfil their own responsibilities to do good work for our population. However, separation of power doesn't mean total independence of state organs. There has to be constant dialogue between institutions because their combined objective is to serve the people.

Juvinal: In the state budget process, the government prepares the budget, Parliament approves the budget, and the President either promulgates or vetoes the budget. In 2016, the current President vetoed the State Budget, and then Parliament did not follow his recommendations and just voted against his veto. What do you think is the value of the Presidential veto or promulgation?

Kalohan: I think this is a very important duty. The main value is not for the President to veto or promulgate, but to give a positive contribution to the state organs to define national priorities, and to allocate resources appropriately to respond to those priorities. When the government decides the national priorities, there needs to be budgetary consistency. Therefore, the President must vote on the quality of the budget based on the political decisions about national priorities. But if the budget doesn't respond to them, I think the President also has the moral responsibility to the population to send the budget back to the Parliament for review. There also must be communication between the two organs to see what caused the budget to be not promulgated.

Juvinal: In the future if you veto a government measure, how will you communicate this to the Parliament or government?

Kalohan: We have to establish a mechanism for this, because the President, as one person, cannot attend to every problem we have. This can help more effective communication to transmit ideas to help the government to review. So on this basis, and also with technical analysis taken from the experience of the previous fiscal year, can also become a reference to offer ideas to improve the budget.

Juvinal: The Constitution says that the President is the Head of State, a symbol and guarantee of national independence, unity, and the normal functioning of democratic institutions. As you are also the Secretary-General of the Democratic Party, if your party wins in the Parliamentary elections or forms a coalition government, what will you do to guarantee independence and

ensure that the President's decisions do not have a conflict of interest or align with PD's interests?

Kalohan: If the President is a symbol of national unity he has to separate his group from the national interest.

Juvinal: Meaning that you will resign as general secretary of the party?

Kalohan: If the people choose me as President I will leave my office as Secretary-General of the Party, so that I can concentrate on my responsibility to the people of Timor-Leste. I defend the principle that La Sama also talked about – my dignity is not higher than the dignity of the nation.

Juvinal: The President is the head of a democratic and sovereign state. At the moment, Timor-Leste still does not have permanent boundaries, on land, air or sea. Timor-Leste brought a case against Australia because of the lack of permanent maritime boundaries, and is currently in negotiations with Indonesia. As President, what will you do to guarantee and strengthen Timor-Leste's sovereignty, and will not lose any area of land or sea to another country?

Kalohan: We in Timor-Leste suffered for many years, and we fought a war for total sovereignty. Our maritime boundary defines Timor-Leste's integrity and sovereignty. Therefore, the President has a responsibility to exercise foreign policy and diplomacy to resolve problems.

Juvinal: Will you stand on the front line in the struggle for a maritime boundary?

Kalohan: Through the Government's diplomatic efforts, the President also has a role to defend Timor-Leste's sovereignty and the maritime boundary. We cannot put the responsibility on one group, party or government. There needs to be continuity from one government to the next. Until we achieve a definitive solution that resolves the maritime boundary issue, what's ours is ours and what's theirs is theirs, this does not call into question our good relations with Australia, but we just ask for our rights to be respected. I think it's also Australia's responsibility to give us what is rightfully ours.

Juvinal: In your campaign in the future, are you ready to ask Australia to respect our sovereignty?

Kalohan: Like before when we fought this war, we ask Australia to respect Timor's rights, as we asked Indonesia to respect them. We ask the international community to respect our rights, and this is a national cause that the President must address to complete our independence.

Juvinal: The Chega! report gave several recommendations, that Timor-Leste, Indonesia or the international community need to establish mechanisms to address crimes against humanity committed during the Indonesian occupation. Until today there has been no formal mechanism, and Presidents have not talked about this question of justice for past crimes, neither have other members of government. As President of the Republic, will you represent the people's interest and bring accountability and justice for the victims who suffered during the Indonesian occupation?

Kalohan: I think we have to recognize that the war resulted in many victims and brutal behaviour committed against the population. But we also have to think of the context of us and Indonesia, and ask Indonesia take responsibility in ways that build good relations. We can't just

respond to the demands of others, so if others ask us to make these condemnations, I think others have to assume responsibility for their actions and support for Indonesia as well. So it's not a question of just us and Indonesia having to make a judgment on those who committed crimes against humanity in Timor-Leste, but also those who supported Indonesia.

Juvinal: Of course Chega! gave a formal, official recommendation which came from Timor-Leste itself. So, as President, are you ready to follow up on this?

Kalohan: We have to continue dialogue with Indonesia to see how we can find a solution to this problem, and Indonesia can take care of its own problem. It is impossible for Timor-Leste to make a judgment and extradite Indonesians to Timor-Leste if we don't yet have an extradition agreement with Indonesia, that is just not realistic. However, this could alert the world to bad actions, and Indonesia itself needs to want to give Timor justice, and to punish their people who have committed crimes, and decide what punishment they will apply, not necessarily by sentencing people to prison.

Juvinal: So as President is there a concrete method you can think of to help our people to get justice?

Kalohan: I think we have to promote dialogue, and that those who have been victims and lost people must have reparations.

Juvinal: According to the presidency, who can pay reparations – the perpetrators of crimes or the State of Timor-Leste?

Kalohan: The state which committed the crimes has the moral responsibility to provide reparations.

Juvinal: To guarantee national stability and strengthen the defence forces, as supreme commander of F-FDTL, what can you do to help F-FDTL become a more professional security force in the future?

Kalohan: When we talk about professionalism and the competence of institutions, we have to look at the available human resources. We have to look at the human resources of the leadership. If you only have good leadership, this will then be reflected in the institution itself. So we have to identify personalities who are dignified to represent this institution, and we have to think about their merits, loyalty, nationalism and patriotism. In this way we can choose a maximal leader who can lead the armed forces in Timor-Leste. We also have to value the institution's performance. When we don't recognize and respect its activities, but minimize the institution's capacity, this will not strengthen the institution.

Juvinal: Many people are worried about the attitudes of the military and police forces, which have often committed crimes which people consider as violations of their human rights. As supreme commander, would you agree for F-FDTL and the police to have human rights training?

Kalohan: I think that this training is necessary for the institution, any institution but especially for F-FDTL and PNTL. They have to characterize themselves properly with respect to human rights, identify what are human rights so that they cannot violate people's rights, but exercise their duties which are to provide defence and security to the nation and the people. So we have

to respect these institutions while the institutions themselves have to be conscious of their responsibilities, and respect the human rights of the people so as to avoid unnecessary violations.

Juvinal: Recently, do you think F-FDTL promotes human rights in its actions?

Kalohan: Their participation in events as an international force is one way to develop their capacity, to see the experiences of other countries, how they can create relations between the armed forces and the population, and I see that they have begun developing. But about behaviour, we have to look at other factors that lead individuals to commit a crime, such as personal problems, because I think that they can commit these acts, but not because of the force, but because of the individual's situation.

Juvinal: In 2015, there was an operation in Laga, Baucau which involved the military and police, and we know that the final result was the death of several people, Mauk Moruk and some members of his group. Civil society and human rights activists consider this as an incident of extra-judicial killing, which is not allowed under the Constitution. As President in the future and as part of the new generation, what policy will you make to guarantee that such an action will not happen again in Timor-Leste?

Kalohan: I think in the principle of dialogue to resolve our problems, but we also need to build stability in our nation. We can't just bow to individual behaviour that affects the national interest. In these situations we have to use persuasive means, not repressive means, meaning that we have to approach and open dialogue. In relation to international problems, we sit at the table to resolve them, so why can't we sit at the table when it's a problem between Timorese? Therefore, this approach was maybe a question of time, as we want to resolve our problems quickly, rather than taking the time to find other ways to resolve our problems.

Juvinal: But we know that this military operation didn't come from the commander of F-FDTL, but from a resolution passed by the Parliament. You were there as the President of the Democratic Party Committee, and PD itself was also involved in this resolution. At the time of drafting this resolution in the Parliament, as President of a national committee, did you agree or disagree with this resolution?

Kalohan: I wasn't directly involved in the decision-making process, but I think this situation was dilemmatic, gun against guns. In this kind of situation, we often don't know how to resolve it properly. And the decision was made because it was guns against guns, and if we go the Bible, there is the principle of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

Juvinal: So does that mean that you agreed with the resolution that came from Parliament?

Kalohan: I'm not saying that I agreed, but this was a means that Parliament used to resolve a problem. The persecution was something separate which authorized the armed forces to conduct an operation, because the state was worried about the political stability of the nation. The effect wasn't just for one person, but it impacted the whole country. But perhaps there also was not enough effort to create the conditions for dialogue to happen, and thus something happened which we all hoped would not happen. But I still defend the principle of dialogue.

Juvinal: But you are President of a national political committee, and also Minister for Education, and this operation resulted in psychological trauma for many children and students. At that time, what did you do to prevent this trauma affecting young people, children and students?

Kalohan: We are now in the recovery phase, and it's not just children who were traumatized by the operation, but the general population which saw again the presence of armed forces. How can we develop their confidence (in the military)? The government needs to create a policy which increases people's confidence in the armed forces and their own government, to dignify our people and to ensure that the government is respected for what it does. It's not something we can do only now but it has to continue, because this cooperation also brings other consequences. It can also result in destroyed homes, demobilised populations... So we need humanitarian assistance or other services which can win back people's confidence. We also need civic education so that our population can understand their rights and also their obligations.

Juvinal: Before we discuss economic issues, I want to give our audience the chance to ask questions related to politics or human rights.

Celestino: I want to ask about the competency of the President to declare the unconstitutionality of governmental or parliamentary resolutions. Do you think that in the future if there is a resolution that contradicts our constitution such as discussed already, especially in relation to military or security operations, will you declare them as such or not?

Kalohan: The President's right and competency is to promulgate laws, and I think the President also has the competency to study and analyse these laws, not just the content of the laws but their social implications, if these laws will give a positive or negative effect to the lives of the people. If a law's implications are bad for the people, the law needs to be revised. For example, we can discuss the Land Law – if the Land Law results in people being removed from their land, and the state has all the rights, who is the state? Is the state an abstract thing, or does the state represent the people?

Juvinal: Does this mean that you think the current Land Law is not good for the people of Timor-Leste?

Kalohan: I think that we have to see if the Law really benefits the people. When we say that land belongs to the state, and the state wants to take over the land, the state needs to create the proper conditions for the people. We can't just kick people off their land, just to go live on the side of the road, and instead of helping to support people's lives we just damage them more. Therefore, we need a good team to look at the laws' impacts before promulgating them.

Juvinal: Timor-Leste's economy depends heavily on revenues from oil and gas. As President, what is your vision to help Timor-Leste to move towards more sustainable economic development, and to replace the petroleum economy?

Kalohan: We have a Strategic Development Plan that lays out the goal of Timor-Leste becoming an upper-middle income country by 2030. If we already have this vision, we need to see what actions we can take to achieve it. We need to employment opportunities, industries, and competent human resources. Our budget also needs to invest in productive sectors, to generate

revenues for the state. Oil isn't the only source that we have – we have resources which we haven't touched yet. Tourism is one productive area, but it needs investment.

Juvinal: So do you agree that we need to develop agriculture, industries and tourism? We know that the President's duties also include vetoing or promulgating the State Budget. And that for the last ten years, less than 2% of the State Budget each year has been allocated to developing agriculture. We also don't have a policy for developing small industries, to create employment. What will you do if the budget continues to neglect these sectors?

Kalohan: My priority in economic development is the development of human resources or education. To improve people's quality of life we also need to develop agriculture and improve nutrition. But I think that commercial services are also very important, to develop industries and create employment, and also to generate revenues for the state.

Juvinal: As ex-Minister of Commerce and Industry, what policy did you manage to design or implement to develop small industries?

Kalohan: I can say that I did promote the economic base through home industry development programs, and there are many of these being done now, such as virgin coconut oil, tais weaving, salt production and other food processing. But we still do not have a policy for putting goods into the domestic market to reduce imports. The government cannot do this alone, we need active participation from the national private sector. But something that has happened is that people are just relying on government projects, waiting for the money to come to them, and not investing their own money to create employment opportunities.

Juvinal: Bayu-Undan, the only currently-producing oil field, will be dry in the next four or five years. You may become President during Bayu-Undan's final stage – do you think that this is dangerous for Timor-Leste?

Kalohan: Certainly, we depend heavily on the petroleum sector and the revenues from Bayu-Undan, and of course this will have an impact when it runs dry. It will have an impact on our economic growth and on our revenues.

Juvinal: So, what will you suggest to the government and Parliament to address this situation?

Kalohan: The Government needs to see how to develop other sectors to contribute revenues to the country. But just because the oil is going to run out doesn't mean that we shouldn't take out money to use for development. This generation has the responsibility to create development and the conditions for future generations, and the government has to look carefully at what methods to use to continue to generate revenues for the country. But certainly, we must believe that even if we run out of money, the country will keep going. Our people have suffered, but they carry on. Today we measure everything in terms of money.

Juvinal: In Timor-Leste today, 67% of the population are not employed in the formal economy, and they are involved in their own creative economic activities. For example, they take 3-wheeled carts to sell goods in the street. However, the state uses the Decree-Law on Hygiene and Public Order to ban people from selling and confiscate their goods. If you are elected as President, will you review this Decree-Law?

Juvinal: Can you make any suggestion?

Kalohan: This Decree-Law came from the Government, therefore the Government can revoke the law.

Kalohan: (The Government) can revoke this law if it results in negative consequences for people's lives. I think that we have the responsibility to improve our city, but this does not mean compromising people's lives. We have to create good conditions for people to earn a living. The street vendors are just looking for people to buy their goods, and engage in this activity because their skills are insufficient to do something more attractive. Therefore, I think that we have to protect the population, but also think that citizens have to be responsible for the nation. They have to earn a living, but if it's in the street it can block traffic.

Juvinal: Parliament approved the Mining Law which will use people's land for mining activities. Timor is a small country, and mining always creates environmental impacts, pollution and toxins. La'o Hamutuk and other activists think that it's better if we don't allow mining in our country. As President, would you approve this law or do you think it's not needed?

Kalohan: We need to develop mining if we want to have other sources of revenue for our country. We need to anticipate environmental impacts and how to prevent and mitigate them, and the Law should predict these and the responsibility should be with the mining industry, as 'corporate social responsibility.' If this is included in the Law I think we need it because we need to develop industries in this country to create employment and generate revenues for our country.

Juvinal: I have many messages from viewers watching at home. Maybe you can say something to them?

Kalohan: I think we all need to continue having dialogue in order to create the conditions to develop and build the nation, not just one person expressing their opinion, but we need interactive dialogue between the people and (Presidential) candidates. I believe this will contribute to our national development, and also contribute to the democratic process which we will have on the 20th March. I think the people can offer their thoughts to help the President to develop their strategic vision so that when they assume this responsibility, they can truly represent the population.

Juvinal: A viewer has asked via SMS, as President, what decision will you make when the state faces a difficult problem?

Kalohan: Now we are going through the process of constructing the nation and the State. We have to strengthen our institutions to have more capacity so that they can fulfil their duties according to the Constitution. The Government, judiciary, Parliament must be competent to carry out the responsibilities. Parliament can't just sit and represent their parties, but has to represent the people and see whether political decisions have a positive effect on people's lives or not. Therefore, this kind of situation is difficult, and the President can become a bridge to create communication and provoke dialogue between all state institutions in order to resolve national problems.

Juvinal: For several years, the Government has withdrawn more than the Estimated Sustainable Income (ESI) from the Petroleum Fund, or the amount which can be withdrawn from the Fund while ensuring that it will not run out. Parliament has always approved this policy, which allows

the Government to withdraw more than the ESI. If this policy continues, the Petroleum Fund will be empty more quickly. As President, what will you do to ensure that the Government's policy will not reduce the value of the main source of wealth that we have?

Kalohan: I think that the President can promote communication between the Government, especially to look at development priorities. We need to concentrate so that the resources will have a benefit, so that investment will create a return. However, we still can't say that investment that has been done so far can generate revenues or returns immediately for our country.

Juvinal: My last question is related to the government's allocation to the Special Zone and Tasi Mane Project. Until today, economic studies have not been published, and we don't know if these projects will give a return to Timor-Leste. As President, can you facilitate access to information for the public about these projects? Also, if the projects just waste money, do you think that they should continue, or do we need to review them?

Kalohan: We need to share information that we currently have. There are studies about the south coast, especially in Suai, Manufahi, Viqueque and Betano. There are studies which classify Development Zones, Living Zones and Agricultural Zones. We have to interpret the plans and studies to see how they will be implemented. I can't say that this development is not a priority, because from one perspective we need to create development, but from another we have limited financial resources.