

Live interview with Presidential Candidate Dr. Francisco Guterres Lú-Olo, Education TV, 14 March 2017

Translation by La'o Hamutuk. For original and other information on the 2017 Presidential election, see <http://www.laohamutuk.org/Justice/2017/PresElec/17PresElec.htm>

Excellency Dr. Lu-Olo – this will be the third time you have run as a candidate for the President of the Republic (PR). What is your principal motivation for running in this election?

Well, it is true this is my third time running as a candidate for PR, and in the first two I won in the first round and lost in the second round, so I have learned more about how democracy works in our country.

At a time where we are all involved in governing and running our sovereign bodies, I feel motivated to run again in this presidential election for the third time.

There is absolutely no problem for a candidate to run, even when he has lost twice or three times, even ten times; when a candidate is determined to serve the state, he should run as a candidate. I think there is no law that limits how many times one person can run as a candidate based on how many times he has lost (in the past).

Therefore I am just following what the constitution and other laws are saying that I can run one more time to compete for the President of the Republic in Timor-Leste for 2017-2022.

Now, as for what is the motivation for my candidacy for the President of the Republic: the motive is big and broad. I want to inform the viewers that I am someone who set my own path (career) in all my life, along with my friends with whom I fought for independence during 24 years in the forest.

Since then, I have had a strong determination to place RDTL as a state that serves this people's own interests, that through democracy and freedom, they choose their leaders from among their own people.

Comrade Lu-Olo is a simple political leader, low profile, an intelligent veteran, who is rarely seen in the spotlight creating political controversies. Many people in Timor-Leste are very proud of your political posture. But on the other hand, people are also concerned that you are controlled by the Secretary-General Dr. Mari Alkatiri. Is this a valid concern or not?

Well, this concern is false, it is absolutely false, but people try to interpret other people's political positions, attitudes and feelings in various ways.

Therefore when one person (decides) to be the President of the Republic, he has a role: first of all, he must understand what is the role of the state in its entirety, and the republican state serves the will of the people to choose, and through this we create the bodies of political power with their own competencies and functions, but all must cooperate with each other.

This is why I always say that while the President can have his own duties, he can also have other shared competencies with other state bodies. Thus the meaning of the separation of powers or state bodies, does not mean that one person or one body has to dominate the others.

Candidate, if you were elected, you will lead Timor-Leste for the next five years. I want to ask what is your main vision as the President of the Republic?

Well this question is very important and contextual to our current political situation. I want to say that we are entering a new political phase where we want to consolidate our democracy, and reaffirm our collective will in order to achieve development in our country.

In the past several years, there are those who have lost in their place, and the winners took everything. As for my own candidacy to be the President, I want a President who fulfils all of his constitutional or legal duties, and he must have good relationship with a strong Government, which is competent to carry out development.

I also would like to say that, the Members of the National Parliament must not come in one door with their differences and go out another door with their differences, they have to always seek and maintain dialogue so that they can reach a consensus in order to serve the state and the interests of all Timor-Leste's people.

Therefore I see my candidacy as one that can bring all the leaders together. I have one commitment, that I will bring together all of us old leaders.

Many people see that when there is a 'National Unity' government, it can weaken democracy as there is no opposition. As President, what can you do to ensure that this unity will not destroy democracy in Timor-Leste?

It certainly will not destroy democracy. On the contrary, it will enrich and strengthen democracy in our country. But this debate presupposes the opposite idea about some issues that we want to debate. But a debate in terms of democracy does not bring us all, preventing us from leaving, each with our own different views.

In a debate, usually we aim for the best outcome to bring us forward. In my own experience when working at the National Parliament, there I presided over many differences, but through these differences we always found ways to find common ground on legislation or any other political process.

So in my candidacy I will give my commitment for national unity, which does not mean a monolithic national unity, but a unity that always advocates for or defends democracy and the difference of ideas. But bringing these differences together in order to find common ground to carry our nation forward.

In the Election Law, a Member of Parliament can lose his/her seat if he/she goes against the decision of his/her party bench, and people say that this is undemocratic because individuals with more power can force other MPs to comply with the bench. How can President Lu-Olo ensure that such weakness will not happen?

Well I always say that democracy will always flourish. When a Law which was approved by the National Parliament states that an MP will be dismissed if he or she goes against the decision of the bench, well that is the law of the National Parliament. This does not mean that there was not a democratic negotiation, but on the contrary, this reinforces democracy so that we can move forward.

Therefore, the MPs are obliged to do what the law says, and the law decides who stays and who leaves. Unless the National Parliament wants to revise the law in the future in order to improve it, the law will still be the law until it has been revised.

In relation to Gender Responsiveness, what is your vision in regards to promoting participation of women and other vulnerable people in the process of state building?

Well, I think this is very important. We can say that this is an extension to democracy, and it's something that I want very much. I think we need a President of Republic who is open to dialogue in order to achieve consensus. Not just from within state bodies and public institutions, but also private ones.

We have many women's organizations in Timor-Leste, which have their own umbrella organization. I think we need to promote women in their role as citizens in order for them to participate better. Therefore we need a government policy that can become guideline for the political orientation for women.

From this, other organizations, whether they work separately or together, can implement the Government's policies regarding women.

Up to now we have heard about gender issues, such the percentage of women in the Parliament, and quotas for women in political parties. For me this is one step, but it is not yet enough because I want to bet on quality. This requires continuous political, economic, social and cultural training. For me this should continue to be a priority and fit in with the government policies going forward.

The Constitution includes several important responsibilities for the President of the Republic. If elected, what roles will be your priorities during the next five years?

I cannot prioritize any one of the competencies that the constitution gives to the President, because any political action carried out by the President is the action of the state.

But competencies are competencies, and sometimes we are faced with (certain) situations. The President will use his competencies to fulfil his duties and functions as the President of the Republic of Timor-Leste.

Candidate, the Constitution lays out the principle of the separation of powers. What will you do to ensure the checks and balances between the state bodies?

The principle of separation of power does not say that, each political power can only exercise its power internally, but according to its mandate, so I consider each independent body as having an interdependent relationship that allows them to fulfil their roles.

It is important for the President of the Republic to exercise his own mandates according to the law, and these can also be shared with other state organs in order to arrive at decisions.

Through our many experiences, we can carry out certain mandates properly in order to carry this state forward, which means that there is interdependency between the independent bodies.

When the National Parliament makes laws, the President's role and power is to control all the laws, the President conducts supervision (inspection) on the law during the process until it has been finalized. On the other hand, the President exercises control which means that he can not only look at the law and sign it but he must provide analysis, look at the constitution, its relevance and systematization to the constitution, and also with other laws in order to check that these new laws will not contradict existing laws, let alone contradict the constitution, so that the President can then veto or promulgate the law. If the law contradicts the constitution, as an exercise of control the President can decide according to his existing mandates.

Candidate, you are also president of one of the biggest parties in Timor who has a chance to lead the Government in 2017. As President of the Republic, the symbol of national unity and independence, what will you do to ensure that there will be no conflict of interest if your FRETILIN leads the government in 2017?

In principle, the President of the Republic should not be an opposition to the Government, nor to the National Parliament, much less interfere with the courts.

The President of the Republic can only fulfill his duties as the Head of State. For me when the majority in the National Parliament, if that will be my party, naturally I will just fulfil my duties as President of the Republic, which is to monitor the legislative acts from the National Parliament.

The President of the Republic has the power to control the National Parliament. I will just follow the majority will, if this will is correct, even if my party is the one in the majority. I cannot be the opposition to the majority if the majority's position is correct.

If elected President, will Dr. Lu-Olo will be ready to leave his role as president of the party to ensure independence of the institution that you are a part of?

There are no laws that say that a president of a party has to leave his role if he becomes President of the Republic. When I am elected as the President of the Republic, once I take office, the act of inauguration will validate the President of the Republic.

I am also aware of the incompatibility of the role of the President of the Republic with some institutional functions, and there are other common incompatibilities.

My party will fall in the common incompatibility category, I myself can also declare to suspend my role as the president of the party so that I can assume the role as President of the Republic only.

At the moment Timor-Leste does not have a permanent maritime boundary with its neighbour Australia, and with Indonesia the land boundary remains unclear. As President of a sovereign nation, what action will President Dr. Lu-Olo take in order to ensure that Timor-Leste will not lose pieces of its sea or land to other nations? Last year there was a huge popular protest calling for a maritime boundary according to the principles of international law. As President of the Republic, what will you do to ensure this sovereignty?

The role of the President of the Republic according to the Constitution of the Republic is to ensure defense and national sovereignty in order to serve our people. This includes the state in its entirety.

Regarding the maritime boundary, the constitution states that the territory should be decided based on measurement of the sea or land to decide where the ours extends to and where another country's extends to. I will just follow what the constitution says.

I want to use the constitution in order to solve the maritime and terrestrial boundaries according to the international rights which we accept as part of our legal structure.

This will serve as our legal basis, through the international conventions which say that such problems should be resolved through dialogue.

Naturally as the President of the Republic, the President will uphold the measures that have been taken up until now, and I will continue to defend our national sovereignty, our maritime sovereignty, terrestrial and air space, and the sovereignty of the people and our laws, in compliance with international law.

At the moment, there is a major effort from the Government, led by Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, to negotiate our maritime boundary with Australia. You have just explained some principles that are related to the delimitation of the maritime boundary. What specific policy will President Dr. Lu-Olo introduce to support this negotiation process?

I can't elaborate this further because I am also a member of the Council for the Delimitation of the Maritime Boundary, hence there are some aspects I cannot discuss.

But I want to say that this process is currently on track, and Australia has recently shown its willingness to open negotiations for a definitive delimitation through the Conciliation Commission which is currently in charge of the case. I feel that this shows good will from Australia and Timor-Leste in order to find a solution, and I trust the Council for the Delimitation of the Maritime Boundary led by Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão to accomplish this.

The *Chega!* report recommended that Timor-Leste, Indonesia and the international community establish a credible mechanism to bring the perpetrators of serious crimes against humanity during the Indonesian military occupation to justice. As President of the Republic, what policy will you introduce in order to ensure that the victims will receive justice?

The international community asked Timor-Leste which has just become independent, a small country, a country that has many problems, to bring justice for the serious crimes. I want to tell the international community that this case is their responsibility.

Since the international community decided to seek justice, tiny Timor-Leste cannot take this step, but on the contrary the international community can take measures to bring (the cases) to justice. The Timorese people are waiting for this, this is the better way.

The International community has decided to bring those who committed serious crimes to justice. For me, as the President of the Republic, Timor-Leste needs to develop its education, health, infrastructure with a healthy economy in order to ensure our country's economy going forward so that it provides hope to many of our children who are currently growing up as we speak. The international community has to assume responsibility for the crimes against humanity.

What will President Lu-Olo do to strengthen the judicial system in Timor-Leste?

One of the important independent bodies of the state is our judiciary or courts. We need to continue to invest in our courts, including investing in human resources, so that they can run effectively. We need to strengthen the Superior Council of Magistrates, which has direct oversight over the courts and the judges.

Therefore, we need to reinforce this body so that they can inspect the work of the judges and make decisions. We don't have to interfere with the justice, because we want the justice (system) to be credible, to function properly, one that everyone trusts, both national citizens and foreigners, so that they want to come and invest in our country. Thus we need a strong judicial system that everyone is confident in.

As the President of the Republic, Dr. Lu-Olo will automatically be the supreme commander of the armed forces. People are concerned with the attitudes of some of the members of the army who are not behaving professionally, and often they commit crimes against the community. What policy will President Lu-Olo introduce in order to make our armed forces more professional?

If an individual or two from the armed forces committed crimes, they have to answer for it in the court of law.

As the President of the Republic I have the responsibility to oversee the armed forces, and the President should cooperate with the Government in order to carefully define the national defence and security policies in Timor-Leste, in order to frame a development policy for the F-FDTL as well as for PNTL. In this way, we can see what is needed for our armed forces to become much more professional and fulfil their assignments in the security and defence forces.

So first is the strategic concept for defence and security, and secondly, the program and concrete actions needed for the development of our F-FDTL and PNTL.

After we gained our independence, the world has become a different place for Timor-Leste. We don't have enemies, but instead we have transnational crimes, drugs and other crimes. Therefore we need to see how we can develop our defence and security for our country and for the interest of our citizens.

So we need to develop a policy that is within the overall development policies that the government has, not just looking at the defence and security separately but how it can link to agriculture, health, infrastructure and education. All of these have to be integrated within a line of policies that will guide the armed forces so that they can fulfil their roles effectively.

Timor-Leste needs a security and defence policy that is cooperative, both internally and externally. We cannot only have security in front of our house, it is better to have security in our village, so that we can cooperate with all of the people in order to preserve the sovereignty of all citizens.

In 2015, there was a major military operation in Baucau, particularly in Laga, which resulted in the deaths of Ex-Commander Mauk Moruk and some of the members of his group. Many people are concerned that this operation violated the constitution. As President and supreme commander of the armed forces, what will President Dr Lu-Olo do to ensure that this will not happen again in the future?

Crises have happened once, twice already. But it won't happen again in the future. I want to ensure this first and foremost.

About Mauk Moruk's death, I think the Government and Parliament did not decide to kill him, according to what I know. I was not in charge at that time. What I do know is that the order was to arrest Mauk Moruk and to bring him to justice because of what he did to the police in Laga, burning cars and various other acts.

So they wanted to bring him to the court. But he tried to run, and in the end reacted with guns against the armed forces, and the army responded in self-defense while at the same time defending this country.

When I say this I don't mean that I want Mauk Moruk to die. Since the beginning I never wanted anyone to in our country including Mauk Moruk, but this is how things turned out and Mauk Moruk had to die as the consequence of it.

How can we avoid this in the future so that cases like Mauk Moruk's will not be repeated?

To avoid this, every citizen has to participate in national development, ensure the consolidation of democracy, so that political parties can compete freely, so that we can achieve political objectives without violence.

Many people are concerned about the issue of good governance. Corruption is flourishing and leaders have used immunity to avoid justice, in particular regarding Emilia Pires' case. What is the President's suggestion for the courts or the Government to ensure that everyone is subject to the judicial mechanisms in Timor-Leste, and also how to ensure that leaders, ministers, members of parliament comply with the law and are not above the law?

It is clear that the state itself is subject to the law and the constitution, let alone one citizen who commits a crime. One cannot be higher than the law.

When one citizen or member of the government commits a crime, he or she certainly has to answer for it in court, and he or she must be responsible for his or her criminal actions.

If a member of government commits corruption, when the accusation falls within the category of crime, naturally their immunity should be removed and they have to follow the process and answer to it in court.

The President of the Republic can ensure that no one can hide behind immunity in order to commit crimes. On the other hand the President can also intervene indirectly through legal mechanisms, from his interaction with the Government or the National Parliament, so that we have a strong system which will not give way to corruptors to enter the government to steal or divert the people's wealth for their own benefit.

Of course we need a strong system, a strong General Prosecutor and the government also needs to create a proper control system which will not leave gaps for corruption. When we say there is corruption this means there are corruptors, and (when this exists) other people will follow this path.

Many times I have said that, for all of the corruption cases, corruption, nepotism, we will just follow the process that already exists. Anyone who commits it has to answer for it in court.

We already have some institutions to fight against corruption, PDHJ, Anti-Corruption Commission, the Courts. Many times they have experienced difficulties when going after the political leaders and members of government. As President, what policies will you make in order to strengthen these institutions, and what will the President do to help them to have more courage to ensure that the people's wealth will be used to benefit all of our citizens?

We created many institutions which are fighting corruption together. Many times these institutions do not function properly, on the contrary, corruption continues to flourish. So we need these institutions to improve their functions by creating legal mechanisms to allow them to combat corruption.

I think all (institutions) have to cooperate to combat corruption, for me it is not the quantity of the institutions that determines the fight against corruption, but most importantly the government's systems, all of the laws should leave no space for corruption.

We can reinforce the General Prosecutor to strengthen its ability to investigate corruption and bring them to the court.

It's interesting to hear, many people are concerned that certain laws allow some people to have an advantage, and the public is questioning the Lifetime Pension Law that the leaders created to facilitate access to state funds. As the President of the Republic, what will you do to reduce the concern from the community that says that this law is a way for elites to become rich rather than to doing something for the people?

Many people said in social media that Lu-Olo is the founder of this law. I want to reply here today that any given law is not authored by one person, nor can two people make a law that binds the state to take the wealth to pay many people. When a law is passed by the National Parliament, this is the

Parliament's law, and it went to the President of the Republic for promulgation, published in the official gazette, then the Law can be applied.

When we first made the law at that time, the fundamental reason was that the first legislature was composed of many veterans who occupied positions in all the independent state bodies. The concern of the Members of the Parliament of the first legislature was that maybe in the next five years, they will not be reelected. How could we assist these people? To send them back to work as farmers to support their own families? I think this is part of the dignity of the state. That was why the National Parliament drafted this bill.

The National Parliament discussed a law for this which was approved at that time. 88 members of the Parliament all voted in favor at that time, and it was approved unanimously that they will receive 100% of their salary which at that time was \$450.

This principle was applied several years ago, because there were fewer laws, the veterans had not received their pensions and our economic development had not progressed. But in recent years the veterans have received their pensions, and some people have improved their skills on how to become advisors, they have better lives. As the President of the Republic, do you think that this law should be repealed because the living conditions then and now are different?

The National Parliament recently has been working to amend this law, so that members of the Government or Parliament who work for five years will get 60%, for ten years will get 75%, the President of the Republic will continue to receive 100%. This amendment is now in Parliament's hands. The President only has the authority to veto or promulgate. There are only these two options for the President.

If during my mandate, the members of the National Parliament want to have discussions at the National Parliament, to abolish or to improve, or reduce, that will be Parliament's role. The President of the Republic has nothing to do with this.

Dr. Lu-Olo is prepared to amend this law?

For the amendment I can only promulgate or veto, if during my mandate, this law is given to me, I could think about it, but it's not the current President's role to change or reduce, this is the next Parliament's competence, they will have to see about this law.

Question from Gaudensio Souza from NGO FORUM: As you know that as part of the development process in a democracy, civil society organizations are an important pillar. When you are elected as the President, what space will you create for the consultation with the civil society before you veto or promulgate (a law)? In your campaigns you always talk about an open presidency. When you become President, specifically how will you do this?

How to have cooperation between the state and civil society, I know that civil society is not the opposition to the Government but is an integral part of the state which has to work with the Government and the State in all areas. And of course they have to be independent, free from control by the government or other state bodies.

However the Government wants to create development in various areas, and the Government does not have enough reach. This is where civil society organizations can step in to do the work, and this is where civil society and the state can cooperate on how to increase participation in the national development process. These are independent organizations and the state should respect their autonomy.

Through our own experience every year the Government provides \$10-11 million for civil society organizations, which are working in various areas, and continue to coordinate in order to know what they have done with the money and what they have not so that the government can do this part.

The second question about an open presidency, this President will conduct an open presidency. First of all I want to open my office to public and private institutions including civil society so that we can have dialogue on any issues that we want to discuss.

We have to bring ourselves to a meeting point so that we can cooperate with each other, but in terms of concrete examples, let us see what policies we will form in the future. (We can look at) how to create a framework according to civil society's programs so that we can continue to cooperate with each other.

The President of the Republic can also consult with civil society on other issues, but regarding law the civil society is not one of the sovereign bodies that the President must consult with. The President will simply use his powers to veto or promulgate the law.

He can hear the opinions, but the opinions of the civil society should not dictate to the President of the Republic whether to veto or promulgate (a law). Civil society or NGOs can write a letter to express their point of view. This also does not dictate to the state bodies which make their own decisions, not necessarily to agree with NGO A or NGO B.

The President also naturally works with others to find out if the money is sufficient or not, whether to reduce or increase. The President will follow all these processes and then he will discuss with the National Parliament, although I also won't ignore civil society's opinions. The President will continue to consider them, but they should not dictate the President's decision.

Timor-Leste's economy depends heavily on oil and gas, and we know that in the last few years the revenues from oil and gas have been decreasing. The main reason is that the reserves are running out – Bayu-Undan will dry up in the next three or four years. Even though development is the Government's responsibility, what can the President suggest to the government in order to replace oil and gas revenues for the development of Timor-Leste in the future?

I am conscious about the Petroleum Fund that you mentioned, I am also conscious that the oil and gas money come from the ground under the ocean not by design for us to just go and collect them, but the nature has given us good fortune, so it is important that we need to use the money and invest in areas which will provide us with returns in order to ensure sustainability in the future. If we just take the money out for non-productive consumption, I think this will be very difficult to achieve. But if we take the money out and invest in education, health, infrastructure and others, I think we will receive returns in the future.

And also, oil and gas is the only source of money which we are currently using. Almost 90% of the money in the state budget comes from oil and gas, and domestic revenues are limited. In my opinion, we should have been investing this money in other areas for a long time, so that we can have alternatives sources of revenue, such as tourism which is very important.

In order to have good tourism, we need to have an integrated plan about the infrastructure, food, roads and water, so that tourism can become an alternative revenue source for Timor-Leste.

But in reality over the last few years, our approach to development has focussed more on high spending, dependency on rice imports from overseas, and we spend money to build mega-projects which NGOs such as La'o Hamutuk consider as a waste of money. As President, if the Government continues to spend money for imports and major projects that have doubtful returns, what will you use to help the Government of Timor-Leste prioritize the areas you mentioned above?

From my point of view, we need to increase production in Timor, we need to produce in order to ensure self-sufficiency. I know that our society comes from small independent producers who produce for their own survival.

The government needs to invest in agriculture so that agriculture can become sustainable, stronger and better so that we can survive. If we don't do this, we will continue to depend on importing rice from other countries.

Timor-Leste has lots of land which could be used for production and to ensure the consumption in during the hungry time, we can talk about that. But when we produce, we can ensure our sustainability.

It's interesting to discuss more about economic development. The current Government, according to its National Strategic Development Plan, has several priorities – Tasi Mane is one main project as a priority of the government. But this project is linked to oil and gas and extractive industries which will take up a large agricultural area. You mentioned earlier about investing in the agricultural sector, but at the same time agriculture is given less than 2% of the state budget every year and the best land is being taken by the government to use for major projects. If this continues during your term, what will you suggest to the government in order to increase agricultural production?

I think the Government has to decide on its own programs to implement in the country. In relation to the Tasi Mane project, maybe the principal target of the project is to bring the oil and gas for processing in the (south coast) area.

About agriculture and others, these are an integral part of the Tasi Mane project. During my mandate, I will talk with the next Government about how we can ensure the sustainability of this large project on the south coast so that it will give a good return to our country.

This project depends on the Sunrise field which is currently being disputed with Australia. If a pipeline from Sunrise doesn't come to Timor, or if this takes 20 more years, as President, will you continue to push for the project or will you ask the government to use the agricultural land in another way?

If we only have a provision for the next 20 years, and if that says that the pipeline won't come here, naturally the government will create an alternative policy on how can we improve and use the state's money to invest so that we continue to have alternatives. This will be the task for the future government.

The future government will not be far from the current coalition of presidential candidates, there is the possibility of a FRETILIN-CNRT government. As President, will you suggest to your own party in the Government to develop the agriculture sector?

I have already said that the agriculture sector is very important. I will suggest to the government to continue improving the sector, building infrastructure to increase production, such as is happening now in Oecusse, where they are building a big dam in order to supply large rice fields, hundreds of hectares, in Oecusse. We can do this in the mainland (of Timor).

It is important that the government create an integrated plan in order to improve the agriculture sector. So we should already have irrigation, and then we should think about how more people can

participate in agriculture. We see that many people are coming to live in Dili these days, and production has fallen, corn production has decreased, and now people only grow corn around the house just to have the taste of eating corn.

People come to Dili because subsistence agriculture cannot sustain them to have a good life, and the Government's import policy is damaging production. We see that our rice production cannot compete with the foreign imports and therefore it forces the farmers to change their profession, move from rural areas to Dili. What can the President suggest to the government to encourage and value the farmers' production?

I think, we need the people to produce good quality products, and also to create the market for local organic production for consumption and selling. But the problem is that we aren't producing. Everyone wants to come to Dili and wait for the imported rice.

How can we motivate our people to improve their production? The policy of "people grow, government buys" is a complete failure. We need to review how to encourage people to grow for consumption, improve their ability to deliver to the market so that people could buy. The government should not be an businessperson who buys and sells.

At the moment many of our communities do not have access to the formal economy. Many of them become street vendors in Dili, but the Government uses the Decree-Law on Hygiene and Public Order to prohibit them from selling, arguing that they destroy the environment and throw rubbish everywhere. But at the same time if they don't do this, they will not have money to support their children's education. I haven't seen any politician, the President or member of the Parliament try to represent the interests of these people. As President, what will you do to help prevent ordinary people from being marginalized from the economic development process?

For me, we need to define a place where there are specific terms for the vendors to sell and for people to buy.

When we don't have such a place, often they want to sell on the street. Our police chase them away, throw their goods into the sea, give them to others or keep them for themselves, but I don't really know.

When the government totally bans them, they don't have money to send their kids to school, so the Government must take care of these people too. We need to give attention to them so that they can continue to sell their products for people to buy.

Timor-Leste currently wants to join ASEAN, but some economic experts and academics think that if Timor-Leste joins ASEAN now and adopts free market policies this will impact farmers. Earlier you said the farmers need support – as President, how will you give suggestions or create policies that will prevent negative impacts to farmers if Timor-Leste becomes a member of ASEAN?

Before this, I want to say that if we join ASEAN, we should prepare our production, so that we can enter the market. If we do not produce, why should we join ASEAN? What are we looking for there?

When we come into ASEAN, we need to follow the requirements that they have. One of the requirements is that we don't have production to enter the market. Second, we have to have open borders, but then how will we be able to compete? Our technical professional skills (need to be increased) to enter the market so that we will be able to compete and find jobs.

When we are not well-prepared but we start to open our borders first, when we applied for jobs, instead of us going abroad, our country will be full of other people. We can become a member of ASEAN, but when we sign certain agreement or conventions for us to become the member.

When we get to the ratification (of these conventions/agreements), we need to put reservations on certain issues so that we can prepare ourselves to be a member with full rights. I have not thought about a roadmap for Timor-Leste to join ASEAN in the first year or the second year.

For me, if I am elected I will continue to talk with the Government on how to prepare ourselves in order to become an ASEAN member so that we can fulfil our international and regional obligations as an ASEAN member so that our people can benefit.

When we join, how do we prepare ourselves for that in order to reap the benefit? Not only preparing our development capacity, but we need to strengthen our government in all areas, public administration, education, health, agriculture and infrastructure. We need to improve these areas first.

Last Question, many people are concerned about the ZEESM project, and many people have not been able to access accurate information. As President, what will you do to help the Timorese people get information regarding ZEESM? People see that this is a little bit sensitive because of the (political) relationship between comrades. What will you do to help people access better information so that there will not be a conflict of interest between the President of the Republic and ZEESM (which is being implemented by your party)?

The suspicion of the relationship between comrade to comrade is not enough. That is not the fundamental reason to establish ZEESM. ZEESM is a major project, it's a state mega project, and the state invests its money there and it will take time before it starts to generate returns for Timor-Leste.

Particularly for Oecusse, I believe that ZEESM which is currently in the process of development, led by Dr. Mari Alkatiri; it is a good development model for Timor-Leste. It's better than starting development from the village level, there won't be any result. We need to have an integrated plan like Oecusse.

I believe that over the next 5 or 10 years our development will improve a lot, so if I am elected as the President of the Republic, I will ask the Government to consider the Oecusse development as a mode that we can implement it in our country in order bring Timor-Leste forward with truly sustainable development.

But for this we need to invest money, but we will receive a return on this investment. I will speak with the government to implement good development going forward. But one more time I want to say that the ZEESM project in Oecusse is not owned by one comrade, but it is owned by the state. I want to be clear on this.

It is unquestionable that if Lu-Olo becomes President of the Republic he will be obliged to follow ZEESM or not, depending on whether others agree with it. But if the project is good for the development of our country and to improve the people of this country's lives, then it is clear that it must be done.

One more thing I would like to add is that if this project is good, it can become a reference or a model for the development in our country.