



**PRIMEIRO
MINISTRO**

**STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE,
DR. RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO,
AT THE 71ST SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

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Palácio do Governo,
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Dili, Timor-Leste

Excellencies

Mr. President of the General Assembly

Mr. Secretary-General

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to begin by congratulating the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, H. E. Mr. Peter Thomson, and to wish you the greatest success in discharging your new duties. It is with great satisfaction that Timor-Leste, a half island, welcomes a representative of a Pacific island to preside over this illustrious organization. I am certain that you are very well aware of the challenges that we face with respect to climate change and the management of our seas and their resources.

I would also like to congratulate the outgoing President, H. E. Mr. Mogens Lykketoft, for all the work that he has conducted and for his unparalleled effort to revitalize the General Assembly, increasing effectiveness and efficiency, and strengthening its role as it carries out the duties set forth in the United Nations Charter, and for his commitment to transparency in the process of selecting the next Secretary-General.

And, this being his last General Assembly, I would also like to express, on behalf of Timor-Leste and our people, our deepest appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for all the support that Timor-Leste has received during his 10 years in office.

His legacy has established the foundations for a reform of the bureaucracy and peacekeeping operations, and he has driven efforts that placed human rights, climate change, refugees, and migrants at their forefront. While a symbol of the ideals of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, worked for a safer world, for women and youth, for sustainable development, and to add relevance to the role of prevention.

This is an opportune moment for change, based on the experience that we have accumulated and on the recommendations included in the reports on Peacekeeping Operations, Peacebuilding Architecture, and Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.

Promoting intergovernmental coherence, and strengthening the Peacebuilding Commission and partnerships for its maintenance are some recommendations that will provide improvements to the United Nations system. Our joint effort needs to be able to respond more effectively to the challenges facing our nations and our peoples.

Mr. President

We continue to be constantly confronted with situations of inequality and conflict, which threaten our collective stability. We all know, and Timor-Leste has first-hand experience, that the United Nations is essential to ensure the security of peoples and countries throughout the world.

We therefore reiterate our belief in the seven principles of the United Nations Charter and in the multilateral and international system, as we are aware that the world has a continued need to keep international peace and security, establish friendly relations among countries, and work in cooperation to find solutions to the problems of the world and to foster respect for human rights. These can be achieved only if countries are an integral part of the search for solutions to the problems that each country faces.

The results that Timor-Leste achieved ultimately confirmed this critical idea. Based on the lessons learned, we wish to contribute to the dreams and hopes of other countries and, through the g7+ and based on the principles of the *New Deal*, we share our experiences and knowledge with a group of 20 fragile states affected by conflict.

Regional integration generates opportunities for economic development and well-being for the people, and also contribute to peace and stability in the country and the region. It is based on this principle that we aspire to join ASEAN, as an opportunity to fulfill the dream of our people and our responsibility as an integral part of civilization.

It is the same principle that drove Timor-Leste, as a member and during our Presidency of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, to propose the concept of economic potential resulting from this trans-regional constellation that includes Europe, Africa, the Americas, and Asia, for debate among its Member States.

To this end and for development and the resulting improvement in the living conditions of its people, we appeal to the urgent need to remove the trade, financial, and economic blockade by the United States of America against the Republic of Cuba.

Mr. President

We are well aware of the importance of peace for development and development for peace, which is a concept that we endeavored to include in Goal 16 of the Agenda 2030 that we approved one year ago.

There must be no doubt: without peace and stability, we cannot think of development and vice-versa!

The new Goals were set to include all countries, so that all may benefit from sustainable development. Last year, Timor-Leste, in addition to being one of the first countries in the world to subscribe to the Sustainable Development Goals, joined a group of another eight countries that, by sharing good practices and experiences, wish to serve as models for the implementation of this Agenda.

In one year, we have formed an inter-ministerial Working Group that, in collaboration with civil society organizations and our development partners, mapped indicators for the 17 Goals and selected 20 targets that will allow us to monitor implementation based on measurable results. We endeavored to raise the awareness of our partners regarding the importance of harmonizing our agendas and the need for financing to achieve results.

We also undertook to convene a high-level international conference in March 2017 to discuss ways to advance the Agenda 2030 under the most difficult circumstances. We are further committed to show to our youth, the future generation, how important their role is in achieving these goals, to which we all must contribute and from which we all derive dividends.

This is not an easy exercise, and we attempted to harmonize the Goals with the planning of our activities and budget under our Government Program. And we will go further. We will also include the Sustainable Development Goals in the review of our Strategic Development Plan, which covers precisely through 2030.

We want its impact on our population to be real and to benefit, in the short, medium, and long term, from the youngest to the oldest citizen, from the cities to the most remote villages. Our experience has already proven that we can achieve this impact, for example, in the health sector. Health is our most precious asset, and we want to offer quality healthcare that benefits and impacts our population.

It is with great satisfaction that I share in this august assembly the fact that Timor-Leste was, according to studies published on "Lancet" magazine on the 21st of this month, the country that achieved most progress in the world in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals related to health since the year 2000, as a result of peace and stability in the country and our efforts to broaden access to healthcare. We have also joined the antibiotic resistance campaign, and a concerted action among our countries will help reduce the number of cases of resistance and increase the number of lives, both human and animal, that benefit from their correct administration.

Mr. President

The world needs to place the physical and moral well-being and the dignity of human beings above any other interests. The refugees and migrants situation remains unsolved and deserves our focused attention and support. There is a continued need for a joint solution to end this situation affecting thousands of people, including children. We still need to establish a frank political dialogue and international partnerships to ensure continued respect for human rights and humanitarian assistance.

Other major scourges insist on afflicting the world. The conflicts in Syria, South Sudan, and Yemen, among others, are far from being resolved. We hope that the recent ceasefire in Syria may be a step on the road to peace and that conditions may be created for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those who most depend on it for their survival. We urgently need to find a solution together, which ensures the right to self-determination for the Sahrawi people, as well as a just solution for the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, which must be respected.

Mr. President

Timor-Leste, as a country that experienced conflict, knows all too well the high price of war and how we must do everything to avoid it, through preventive diplomacy and by strengthening the institutions of the State. In addition to our contribution within G7+, we are also willing, as in the past, to be part of other contingents and thus contribute to peacekeeping operations and demonstrate our gratitude toward the international community. For our past and for our present, Timor-Leste can serve as an example and a source of hope as a country that emerged from a conflict situation and became a peaceful country, with security and stability, where all benefit from the dividends of peace.

Even when countries emerge from conflict situations, there may remain issues of security that continue to threaten the nations. Acts of terrorism, organized crime, and threats to peace and stability have been constant and rather worrisome. The efforts to combat it require the commitment of all of us require us to work together and find a solution that lasts.

Timor-Leste, by ratifying Conventions, has strengthened our commitments to contribute to the prevention and fight against terrorism and organized crime. Money laundering and illicit financial flows are intimately connected with organized crime, and we are aware of the importance of also fighting piracy and the trafficking of drugs, persons, and arms.

Some of these crimes are committed at or through the sea. And, in order to combat these crimes and safeguard economic potential, we must also protect our borders and ensure maritime security. We are a maritime nation and, for us, the sea is highly and strategically important. To explore the potential that living and non-living maritime resources offer is to give ourselves the opportunity to diversify our economy through fishing activities and the development of tourism and non-living resources. It means sustainable development, which is doubly beneficial, not just for humans, but also for the environment.

We are thankful for the efforts of Fiji and Sweden in organizing the United Nations High-Level Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, which refers to oceans, to take place here, in New York, in June 2017.

Regarding the climate change issue, all countries in the world are committed to “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”. Island nations such as Timor-Leste are truly affected by the impact of these challenges. Our commitment to eradicate this scourge is demonstrated in the fact that we have actively participated in the negotiations and we have signed, in April of this year, the Paris Agreement which is in the process of being ratified in our National Parliament.

Mr. President

In addition to this global concern, Timor-Leste also faces the challenge of establishing sovereign rights over our surrounding seas by delimiting our maritime borders.

Even after fourteen years since Timor-Leste became the 191st member of the United Nations, we still do not have defined maritime borders with our two maritime neighbors, Indonesia and Australia. The delimitation of our maritime borders will ensure our sovereign rights and give us certainty with respect to what belongs to us, thus ensuring our economic stability – and even our self-sufficiency – and a better future for our people and our nation.

We are staunch advocates of dialogue and the peaceful resolution of disputes, and believe in the multilateral system and international law, whereby all States are equal before the law, regardless of their size or wealth. It is based on these principles, which ensure equality among nations, that we began discussions with a view toward delimiting maritime borders with Indonesia, under international law, and hope to do the same with Australia, in a true spirit of openness, transparency, and friendship.

For this reason, in April of this year, Timor-Leste started a process of compulsory conciliation – a mechanism to resolve disputes under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea. This process, which is being used for the first time, was specifically conceived for cases such as Timor-Leste's, where there is a dispute regarding maritime borders with a neighbor that withdrew from binding dispute resolution procedures under international law.

The first meeting of the Compulsory Conciliation Commission took place this past August 29th and we are confident that the panel of independent experts, after reviewing each country's position, will contribute to the achievement of an amicable solution. We are certain that Australia, an important country for our region, will participate and contribute in a positive manner to finding a just solution that is acceptable to both parties.

Mr. President

Timor-Leste undertook here, in 2015, the commitment to assiduously work with all nations so that, together, we may implement a transformational agenda designed to “shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path.” The Sustainable Development Goals also have targets, and we must ensure the contribution of all for their implementation. In that sense, I would like to appeal to the search for innovative solutions, strengthening the spirit of solidarity, collective effort and the importance of acting in a coordinated manner.

Finally Mr. President, I reiterate the unshakeable conviction of Timor-Leste on the importance of the multilateral system, the primacy of dialogue and peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts, on the basis of international law and the preservation of democracy and the Rule of Law as essential ingredients to the progress of peoples and nations. Is my hope also on behalf of Timor-Leste, that its mandate be full of successes, because failure is not an option, because humanity is in urgent need for change to ensure the preservation of its existence.

Thank you very much.

September 24, 2016
Dr Rui Maria de Araújo