

Televised Address by the President of the Republic Lu-Olo on Sovereignty

24 August 2017, Translated

Beloved people of Timor-Leste!

We have entered a new phase of the strengthening of our sovereignty as a nation. On the 20th of May 2002, we restored our national independence after a 24-year struggle for national liberation. On the 27th of September 2002, the international community recognised Timor-Leste as a United Nations member state.

With the international recognition of our independence, our rulers turned their minds to our maritime sovereignty, in accordance with international law.

Despite being independent, we don't yet know the extent of our maritime area. We don't yet have the necessary sovereignty or the capability to make decisions regarding our territory, because we don't know the limits of the maritime and land borders that separate us from our neighbouring countries, Australia and Indonesia.

In the exercise of the authority granted to the government by the constitution of Timor-Leste, the 6th government, through Resolution No. 4/2016 of 9 February, a chief negotiator was appointed to lead the negotiation team of a treaty of demarcation of the maritime borders with Indonesia and Australia. According to the terms of this resolution, it was our brother Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão who took on the role of chief negotiator and, more recently, head of the negotiation team for the final demarcation of the maritime borders with Indonesia and Australia.

In August 2015, Indonesia entered direct negotiations with Timor-Leste regarding the maritime border. With Australia, the process took a different path, guided by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The compulsory conciliation procedure appeared as an alternative solution. This process began in April 2016. Timor-Leste was the first country to make a decision based on this international procedure to start the negotiation of the maritime border.

This conciliation procedure is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, it was thanks to the leadership skills, wisdom, dedication and determination of our brother Xanana that the treaty of demarcation of the maritime border between Timor-Leste and Australia in the Tasi Mane arose.

Because this negotiation is intimately related to the sovereignty of Timor-Leste, to one of our national interests, I, as head of state, want to express my full support to the government of Timor-Leste, through our brother Xanana Gusmão, who is leading and will continue to lead the negotiation with a view to achieving a result that is fair to us, in accordance with international law.

The president of the republic wishes success to our chief negotiator, our brother Xanana Gusmão, and to his entire team who are committed to work to overcome this new challenge.

Within the context of international law, I am certain that we will one day be able to identify our maritime and land areas. We will have sovereignty over the entire territory of Timor-Leste, from north to south, from east to west.

The bodies of sovereignty of the state of Timor-Leste, the public and private institutions, and even the F-FDTL and the PNTL will remain committed to the defence of our sovereignty, peace and stability, with the support of the people.

This is one more challenge we must face, but one that I believe we will overcome!