



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE

SPEECH BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO
AT THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE DÍLI
INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE

“Peacebuilding and Statebuilding”

Díli

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Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is a historic day for Timor-Leste.

We have been writing the pages of Timor-Leste's history since we began our struggle for self-determination and for freedom. We have recorded stories of massacres and heroic deeds, tales of hardship, suffering and conflict, but also tales of victory and achievement - and it is these chronicles that tell of how our People gained the right to Independence.

These are pages of history written with blood, but also with hope, courage and pride. These pages recount advances and setbacks, errors and lessons learned, conflict and recovery.

And today, ladies and gentlemen, we have joined our history with that of other countries with a common past, and we have realised that we are not alone in our Peacebuilding and Statebuilding endeavours.

We have joined together with a common voice with nations that have similar histories and situations of fragility, as well as with partner countries committed to assisting us in our great challenges. In the words of Minister Kamitatu, we have moved from a monologue to dialogue.

Hosting the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, which will forever be marked by the Díli Declaration, gives our country great pride and emotion.

I thank you all, ladies and gentlemen, for the honour we received in being chosen to host this first formal meeting.

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have personally been inspired, moved and also encouraged by the contributions made at this dialogue. I am also humbled...

It can be easy to breathe a sigh of relief when you begin to show signs of progress, when you achieve a level of apparent stability, because in times of peace we can forget the hardships of conflict. This may be a reason for the resurgence of conflicts, with the human condition

encouraging us to erase from our memory the difficult times of suffering and to move on quickly towards progress.

This can cause us to miss some important steps. In seeking to move ahead, we risk overlooking the roots of our problems. In seeking to hasten the healing process of deep wounds, that have not yet had time to properly heal, we start to believe that reconciliation can be possible in a mere five or six years.

That is why I am pleased with the common agreement, by both fragile States and development partners, on the need for a long term approach to Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. And this agreement has been properly reflected in the Dili Declaration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We understand from the statements made at this Dialogue, that the deep complexity of issues that constrain conflict or post-conflict countries mean that it becomes impossible to deal with all problems at once. And we have also learnt that failure to acknowledge the true time it takes to resolve our difficulties may be fatal and lead to resurgence of conflict.

On the other hand, if donor countries cease providing ongoing assistance at the first signs of improvement, in stability and economic and social progress, this leaves a void in the processes and programs that have been started, ultimately leading to their failure.

It is absolutely necessary to respect the time frame and context of each society. This is our true challenge, as there are no two identical cultures or circumstances.

Nevertheless, each and every society, and each and every People, value Peace as precious. Humans, both individually and collectively, desire Peace. It is critical to us all.

Regrettably, as many of us know, starting conflict is so much easier than resolving it. It is easier to make war than to make Peace.

War focuses all our energy, and all our effort, on a single goal: to destroy the enemy. But Peace requires consensus building and reconciliation. It requires bringing together the aspirations of many to develop a common long term vision – and then to implement it.

Peace requires sacrifices in putting the interests of the whole ahead of the interests of the individual. It requires patience, forgiveness and trust, and most of all, compassionate and strong leadership.

Perhaps it is for these reasons that there are so few exceptional individuals that the world acknowledges as pioneers of Peace.

But as President Ramos-Horta said so eloquently to this Dialogue, Peacebuilding also requires leaders connected to their People. And, ladies and gentlemen, even being the most worldly of Presidents, Ramos-Horta is first and foremost close to our People, and to their fears and to their dreams and aspirations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Like some here, I can speak from personal experience that it is more difficult to lead in times of peace than in times of war. I have been there. I lived many years convinced that I would never have to endure difficulties as hard as when I led my People during struggle. But, when I was given the challenge to become the First President of a nation traumatised by war, I realised that the greater struggle would be to build Peace, and subsequently the nation.

To join an entire People, that have been scarred from conflict, in the struggle for Peace is more difficult than to achieve unity in times of conflict. As we know, there are so many legitimate expectations from People who have fought for so many years for the ideals of freedom, equality and development that we can say that achieving true peace also means freeing People from poverty.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is also the challenge of Statebuilding, a process that is inter-related with the building of peace. As two sides of the same coin, it is important that emergency international support does not withdraw when peace appears to have been reached, and that we understand that Peacebuilding is consolidated when Statebuilding is strong.

And so, we must ask how do you empower people who have never known what power is? How do you build a democratic State, with the participation of all, when People have never known what it means to be free from misery, hunger, ignorance and disease? In our poor

societies, people still kill each other for survival, for simple access to water, food, land, schools and health care.

It is, therefore, perhaps easier for us to understand why people also kill for access to political power and control over national decision making, especially in countries with valuable natural resources.

One aim of this Dialogue is to find better solutions and to share best practices to address these problems. And if in this Dialogue we do not resolve all the problems affecting fragile States, at least we have taken one more step in this direction of concrete actions.

As we have discussed, Statebuilding means a transition not just for countries but for their People. It can mean transforming militias or guerrilla fighters into soldiers of conventional forces; youth without a childhood of joy and education into responsible adults; hardened resistance activists into professional journalists; and leaders of a struggle into mature political office holders.

And many cases presented at this Dialogue demonstrate that we cannot underestimate the challenges, especially when the edifices of the pillars of the State hide its inherent weakness.

An example that saddens us deeply in Timor-Leste is Guinea-Bissau. This country's achievement of independence inspired our People in their struggle. The turmoil in this country upsets us greatly and we feel solidarity for our brothers and sisters in this African nation.

Guinea-Bissau has received huge quantities of international assistance in comparison to the size of its national economy and yet it continues to struggle. And so, we can conclude that this assistance must not have been appropriate to the circumstances.

Ladies and gentlemen

This is why all "g7+" countries have emphasised the importance of understanding the need of each country to have a transitional period of their own time and at their own pace.

As Ms Bella Bird wisely commented to this Dialogue, the transition from fragility to resilience requires a balanced and flexible approach. This balance requires fragile nations and donors to be nimble enough to respond to emerging situations that may threaten recovery, while continuing to address the ongoing root causes of conflict.

Life is a process of building knowledge, of learning from experiences, and following our dreams and our visions. The life lived by citizens in fragile countries is far from easy – not only is it a constant struggle for survival, it can be a challenge to come to terms with new concepts and values.

The road towards democracy and development knows no shortcuts. One must walk the hard road to transform mentalities and achieve social inclusion.

That is why the “g7+” countries have asked our friends, the development partners, to walk in our shoes and be aware of our conditions and our needs. We can then better walk together towards our shared goal of spreading peace and prosperity. And with our achievements the hopes and visions of donor countries can be fulfilled.

I draw hope and confidence from the Dili Declaration. The development partners and fragile States have recognised that we can both do things better while reinforcing our common shared goal. We are encouraged by the proposal to develop an action plan and by the determination to take immediate steps to address issues of concern in the delivery of development assistance.

The Dili Declaration has committed strong support to the “g7+” institutional grouping as a permanent forum to bring together fragile States in a spirit of solidarity and friendship and allow for better preparation in the international discussions with the development partners. And I would like to thank Australia for offering today to provide the funding to support this body and I hope that other countries will join with them in this effort.

I am also very pleased that following the inspiring leadership Mr Kamitatu that our own Minister Emilia Pires will take over as co-chair of the international dialogue. It is not only a matter of pride for Timor-Leste but also a symbol of the responsibility we wish to bring to this process.

This Dialogue is part of an ongoing process and I am pleased that the Dili Declaration will guide and inform the international community in its future work.

And, ladies and gentlemen, I hope that the suggestion made today, that Dili become a centre for international and United Nations’ conferences, becomes a reality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We must all learn from the lessons of our past and remain vigilant and determined in our mission to prevent political violence and conflict.

Walking together gives us strength in this mission.

Walking together, fragile States and their development partners, can minimise the suffering that results from conflict and extreme poverty.

Let us all work together to bring hope and confidence and develop a long term vision for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding in our fragile nations.

Hopefully, we can make sure that no more tears of conflict fall on the snow of Nepal's majestic Himalayas; that no more blood covers the sparkling diamonds of Sierra Leone; that the soul of the people of the DRC reflects the richness of their lands; that the People of Southern Sudan achieve self-realisation; that 'bridges' of peace can be built between the islands of the archipelago of the Solomon Islands; and that all our fragile nations can achieve peace and development.

Thank you very much.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão

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