



PRIME
MINISTER

COUNTRY STATEMENT ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME
MINISTER OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE KAY RALA
XANANA GUSMÃO ON THE OCCASION OF THE 70TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND
THE PACIFIC

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to address this 70th Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific with a country statement for Timor-Leste.

While the recent disorder in international relations reminds us of the importance of this Commission, and of international engagement and cooperation, we are all also working to achieve progress in our own countries and improve the lives of our people.

Timor-Leste is a young country with many development challenges. In the early years of our independence we suffered a cycle of violence. The scars of our traumatic past were still healing and we had to learn to reconcile our differences and address the root causes of our fragility.

After internal unrest in 2006 threatened to tear our new nation apart the Timorese people came together to firmly say good bye to conflict and welcome development. Today, Timor-Leste is a development success story thanks to the determination of our people and the support of our international friends. Since our crisis of 2006 we, as a people, have pulled together. In tackling the root causes of our fragility we were able to embark on a process of peace building and State building. We had learnt only too well that conflict can wipe out years of development progress.

We were fortunate that income started to flow from oil reserves in the Timor Sea and we made sure we had systems in place, to be able to provide for the urgent needs of today, while protecting income for future generations. We established a Petroleum Fund, which has grown from its opening balance of \$205 million in September 2005 to almost \$16 billion today.

Timor-Leste was also the first in Asia, and third in the world, to be compliant with the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (the EITI), so that every dollar that comes in, from petroleum revenue, is publicly disclosed and transparent.

We invested in capacity building in the security sector to improve professionalism in the Police and in the Military, bringing about a new stage of cooperation and solidarity among the two institutions and, essentially, to abide by the Constitution.

In the pursuit of social justice as well as stability we have established a strong system of social support and are providing pensions to our veterans, the elderly, the disabled, widows and orphans. We know that our progress as a nation can be judged by the living conditions of the most disadvantaged in our society and that without peace and internal reconciliation, there can be no inclusive development.

Having established a foundation of peace and security, we turned our attention to long term planning and entered a new phase of our development. In 2011 our Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 was released setting a framework to transform Timor-Leste from a low-income country to a medium-high income country by 2030, with a healthy, educated and safe population. We have begun to implement our Plan and we are already achieving some outstanding results.

Our progress can be measured in many ways. One way is through economic growth, and since 2007 Timor-Leste has averaged double digit rates of economic growth with the International Monetary Fund predicting continued strong growth into the future.

But we also know that growth must be balanced and the benefits shared in an inclusive way. That is why we have established local development programs to create jobs and improve living conditions of the population in every village across our country, especially with assistance in health, power supply, water and sanitation and access to education and to markets. We are also moving towards the establishment of local government and have begun with pre-decentralisation mechanisms to build the administrative capacity of our regions.

Our progress can also be measured by looking at health and education. Our child mortality rates have sharply declined and life expectancy at birth has increased from 59.5 in 2006 to 64.6 in 2011. In the education sector we have worked to lift the number of children enrolled in school and we are strengthening our education institutions.

We have completed the largest infrastructure project in our people's history, by building a national electricity grid with generation and distribution across the country. Being a mountainous country, and preparing ourselves for a good system of connectivity, we already have fibre optic cables along the country taking advantage of the towers of the electricity distribution lines. We are preparing the conditions, in a proper time, for e-government, e-health, e-education and other important areas.

We are embarking on an infrastructure program to provide a basis for a nation's sustainable economic future, which will include a new national port, a major airport upgrade, a national road network and the extensive development of our south coast to become a sub-regional centre for the petroleum industry.

Under the leadership of our former Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, Dr Mari Alkatiri, we are also establishing Special Economic Zones in Timor-Leste including our first which will be a Special Economic and Social Zone in the enclave of Oecusse.

While we have made great progress from the time of the Restoration of our Independence in 2002, we know that so much more needs to be done to improve the daily lives of our people, achieve better development outcomes and realise the dreams of our liberation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a small nation in a globalised world we also know that our future depends on cooperative relations with our international friends. That is why we were honoured and privileged to hold the Chair of the 69th Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Last month, we hosted the Heads of State and Government Summit of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries. This was a historical moment for our nation as it is the first time we have assumed the Presidency of the CPLP and we will now preside over the organisation for two years. It was also a historical moment for the CPLP as it was first time the CPLP Summit was held in the Asia Pacific; broadening the reach and influence of the organisation.

While Timor-Leste continues to pursue membership of ASEAN we are also deepening our relations with the great island nations of the Pacific.

An important part of our international focus is working with other fragile countries around the world through the g7+ group of 20 fragile and conflict

affected States. The g7+ plays a global role as voice for fragile countries and to advocate for change in global development policies

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite our turbulent past, Timor-Leste has established a vibrant and free democracy, a tolerant and peaceful society and the foundations for sustained economic growth and development progress.

We look forward to working with the Commission during its 70th session and trust that next year we will be able to report further development progress in Timor-Leste.

Thank you very much.