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TIMOR LESTE

PRIME
MINISTER

**KEYNOTE 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**

Bangkok

7 August 2014

His Excellency, Mr. Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of Bhutan

His Excellency, Lord Tu'ivakano, Prime Minister of Tonga

His Excellency, Mr. Manasvi Srisodapol, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand

Her Excellency, Ms. Shamshad Akhtar, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Executive Secretary of ESCAP

His Excellency, Mr. Shun-ichi Murata, Deputy Executive Secretary of ESCAP

His Excellency, Mr. Adnan H Aliani, Secretary of the Commission

Ministers

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In April last year, I was honoured to take over the Chair of the 69th session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

And so I have had the privilege to Chair this Commission over the past year and work with the ESCAP secretariat, and the countries of the region, to make further progress towards sustainable development and international progress.

It is a privilege to again address the annual Commission session, the highest intergovernmental forum for policy dialogue on development issues in the Asian Pacific region.

Being Chair of the Commission has allowed me to work with you to shape approaches to economic and social challenges facing our region.

Last year, in this Hall, I made a call for us to work together to draw a road map for a joint approach to regional and sub-regional integrated development. I am pleased to be able to say that we have made significant progress.

Already in its 69th session, the Commission has adopted 17 resolutions that harness regional opportunity. The resolutions have supported opportunities for inclusive growth, addressing structural and development gaps, ending hunger, building resilience against external shocks both from natural disasters and financial crisis and have helped secure the sustainable future we all want.

In this session the Commission has also fostered regional consensus to set a path for enhanced energy security, and member countries have adopted a landmark agenda for shaping the future of sustainable energy in the region.

We have adopted a ground breaking agenda on population, development and rights, which issued a strong reaffirmation that gender equality and sexual and reproductive health rights are indispensable to sustainable development, and must be a key part of the post-2015 development framework.

In December last year, Asia-Pacific countries unanimously endorsed a landmark declaration outlining the road map towards a regional economic community. Together with government leaders, ministers and senior officials from 36 countries, we adopted the 'Bangkok Declaration on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific,' resolving to work closer together to build an integrated market, seamless transport and energy connectivity, financial cooperation and enhance resilience to address vulnerabilities and risks of natural disasters.

This year, the Commission has been the regional platform for Asia-Pacific countries to foster consensus on the shape of the post-2015 development agenda. We have sought an agenda that keeps the promise and the commitment to fight poverty, hunger, and other forms of deprivation, but also faces head-on the problems of rising inequality, fragility and conflict, exploitation, climate change and environmental pressures.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

While I am pleased with the significant progress we have made through ESCAP, our region and the globe continues to face many challenges. Last year, when I accepted the Chair of the 69th session of ESCAP, I spoke of concerns for a world of disunity and disorder. Regrettably, since that time, we have seen a deterioration in the state of world affairs.

Last month we were all shocked to learn of the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 and the death of so many innocent people. In many ways, the tragedy of flight MH17 reflects the current state of international relations in which a cold war mentality continues to infect global perceptives. We see

countries blindly pursue their own short term self-interest rather than working together for a common good.

In the Middle East the hopes and promise of the Arab Spring are now just an idealistic memory blown away like desert sand in the wind. Across the region we see a rise in fundamentalism, intolerance and unfathomable sectarian violence.

We watch in horror the terror and death in Israel and Gaza and despair that peace remains elusive. I believe many of us received the open letter from the President of Indonesia, His Excellency, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, on this issue. Allow me, ladies and gentlemen, to quote His Excellency:

“Although I am a Muslim, I realise full well that this conflict is not a religious conflict. I do not associate my call and thoughts with Islam, Judaism, Catholicism, Christianity and any other faiths or religious beliefs. The problems that we are facing now relate to the issue of humanity, morality, law, and war ethics, as well as actions from any side that have gone way beyond what is acceptable. This humanitarian tragedy and unbearable human misery are also attributed to the sense of responsibility from the leaders, which directly or indirectly have made this humanitarian tragedy an enduring problem.”

In East Asia, the powerhouse of the world economy, we are despondent as tensions rise between our close friends and we all know that there is, or there should be, a better way...to build collective understanding for more reciprocal cooperation and shared benefit.

Across the globe there are still 2.2 billion people already facing, or heading towards, poverty, hunger, disease and exclusion. Even with the remarkable growth of the Asia Pacific our region is still home to nearly two-thirds of the world's poor.

Meanwhile, we are watching a dangerous rise in inequality with wealth and power being accumulated by the few, to the detriment of the rest of humanity. After the greed and corruption of the international financial system caused the Global Financial Crisis we are seeing the entire population of the developed world struggling with enormous economic burden, as a result of dramatic austerity measures, where the recovery only benefits the very perpetrators of the financial meltdown. And so, elite interests, with huge financial resources, have been able to avoid paying their share of tax and have been able to capture and dominate governments. We must remember that the problem is

not just inequality within nations but also between nations with the entrenchment of economic segregation of the world's Least Developed Countries. Even with the situation like this, world leaders only focus to escalate tensions and support war.

Nowadays, everybody who follows the news hears of people talking about stopping the war. I believe we should start changing our mindset and instead of talking about war we should all be making a big campaign for peace. And instead of saying 'I am against war', we should say 'I am for peace' because peace is more than the absence of war; peace means in political environments, peace for inclusive development, and peace in the relations amongst societies and between nations.

And, in the middle of the humanitarian crisis provoked by war in so many places, last week the Pacific Islands Forum was held in Palau and the threat of climate change again dominated the agenda. The weak global response to climate change threatens the very existence of some nations that risk being swallowed by the rising waves of the Pacific Ocean.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

While there may have been deterioration in international affairs over the past year we also have reason for hope.

As well as the good work of this Commission we have also witnessed great progress throughout our own region.

In India and Indonesia we have seen the world's second and third largest democracies hold successful elections. Indonesia is Timor-Leste's closest neighbour and has been enjoying ten years of inspired leadership by His Excellency Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono building a modern democracy of unity and progress. We will now see another peaceful transition to President Joko Widodo and we wish him all the best for his great nation. We believe that the political leaders will put the interests of the people first in order to create a climate of tolerance and unity as the guiding principle for development.

We are all in Bangkok where instability has led to political changes. On behalf of the people of Timor-Leste, and I believe on behalf of all the members of

ESCAP, and knowing that there is already a road map presented by the National Council of Peace and Order to make sure that the transition to the democratic process can proceed with the involvement of all the components of society, I can say that we understand that with every social, economic and political process each country always faces big challenges. What is important is that everybody undertakes proper introspection in order to serve the interests of the State, the country and all of the population. In the end we wish all the best to the people of Thailand.

In China progress continues to astound us all as this nation lifts hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, drives regional and global economic growth and makes sweeping governance reforms. With it, we see economies throughout the Asia-Pacific growing at remarkable rates to improve the quality of life for so many in our region.

And technological progress continues to drive positive change and connect us all in ways unthinkable even in the recent past.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To address the challenges of our region and to realise our opportunities we must continue to work with dedication and commitment. ESCAP provides the forum to bring us all together to forge a common partnership for progress.

Next month the United Nations General Assembly will consider the proposed Sustainable Development Goals and the future global development agenda.

Timor-Leste has been working hard, through the g7+ group of 20 fragile and conflict affected nations, to make sure that this agenda reflects the needs of fragile states and recognises that without peace there can be no development.

We are pleased that one of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals is to "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels".

We must all work together to make sure that the outcome of the deliberations in New York next month will be to set a global framework to ensure sustained and

inclusive development for all. In this, the role of ESCAP, as the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in Asia and the Pacific, is crucial.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite global challenges, I remain positive about our future. We need to continue to focus on our shared interests and the importance of tolerance, cooperation and peace. We need to continue taking collective regional and international actions to build resilient, just and vibrant societies.

The Commission plays an important role undertaking policy research and analysis on critical and emerging issues and bringing them to the attention of member States for policy discussion and decisions.

The Commission also has a role building the capacities of member States on those issues through technical cooperation at the regional level and by forging partnerships with other development partners within and outside the United Nations system.

I now renew my call for us to work together to chart the path for the sustainable development of our region. I look forward to seeing this reflected in the outcome of the 70th ESCAP Commission Session and I wish you all success in your deliberations.

Last but not least I would like to pay tribute to Dr Noeleen Heyzer for her hard work and dedication to ESCAP. Dr Heyzer is now the Special Adviser of the United Nations Secretary General for Timor-Leste giving us very useful insights into our task of strengthening our State and improving our service delivery as well as reducing poverty and inequality between rural and urban areas. Thank you Noeleen.

To the new Executive Secretary of ESCAP, and the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ms. Shamshad Akhtar, I wish you all the best in your current endeavour.

Thank you very much