



**SPEECH**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO**

**PRIME MINISTER OF THE DEMOCRATIC  
REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE**

**OPENING OF THE ASEAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION 11<sup>TH</sup>  
COUNCIL MEETING FOR THE 2007/2011 SESSION**

**1 August 2009**

Excellency, President of the ASEAN Football Federation, Tengku Tan Sri Dato' Seri Ahmad Rithauddeen

Dear Representatives from the ASEAN Football Federation

Dear friend, Dr. Mari Alkatiri

Dear friend, President of the Timor-Leste Olympic Committee, Eng. João Carrascalão

Dear Ambassadors

Members of National Parliament

Members of the Government

Excellencies

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure to be here to open the 11<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting of the ASEAN Football Federation for the 2007/2011 season.

And it is an honour for Timor-Leste to host this meeting which reflects our solidarity with our ASEAN friends and our shared love of football.

I also welcome our ASEAN Football Federation colleagues to Timor-Leste and I hope that you have a productive and successful meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Timor-Leste is a nation of football lovers. It is our most popular sport and it has captured the hearts of our People and the spirit of our youth.

On many nights the grounds in front of the Palácio do Governo are crowded with football fans. They are enjoying watching a game on the big screen, together with their family and friends.

And in the districts of Timor-Leste, football fields (although not well maintained) are everywhere, marking a central place for our villages and towns.

They provide a sense of community and a place where our People come together.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The game of football provides inspiration, enjoyment and a positive pursuit for our People - and most importantly for our young people.

Football makes a real contribution to building strong communities in our country.

Timor-Leste is now at the stage of national development where we can strengthen the organisation of football to provide further opportunities for our young people.

We still face many challenges. These include the need for improved football infrastructure as well as more skilled managers, coaches, referees and football administrators.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We need to look at developing football clubs in Timor-Leste – and not just football teams.

We need to look at developing football leagues in Timor-Leste – and not just football tournaments.

And when the time is right, we need to look at developing a national league across our nation.

This will not be easy. It will take a lot of hard work and planning.

We will have to strengthen our football management and develop football club administrations. And we will have to build football programs in our schools.

Fortunately, we have an excellent local Football Federation. And our Federation is well placed to look to the ASEAN Football Federation to support us with the development of the game.

Ladies and gentlemen

Football is more than a game – it should also play a role in the promotion of friendship and solidarity in our region.

This Council Meeting is a good example – it has brought together people from our regional neighbours. In doing so, it plays a role in promoting peace, respect and community in our region.

Our hosting of this Council Meeting is also, of course, an expression of our commitment to be a part of the ASEAN community.

As part of South East Asia, we share ASEAN's aim to foster economic growth, social and cultural development and regional peace and stability.

And so Timor-Leste is actively working towards joining ASEAN as soon as possible.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I welcome you again to Timor-Leste.

Football is loved by our People but we must keep working to strengthen the game in Timor-Leste. I hope that we can do this working together in friendship and solidarity.

I wish this Council Meeting the most success.

And I hope that while you are here you enjoy the beauty of our country and the hospitality of our People.

I take this opportunity to officially declare this Meeting open!

Thank you very much.