



**P R I M E
M I N I S T E R**

**ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE END OF MISSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL
STABILISATION FORCE**

**21 November 2012
Ministry of Defence
Díli**



Palácio do Governo,
Avenida Presidente Nicolau Lobato,
Díli, Timor-Leste

Your Excellency, Chief of the Defence Force of Australia
Your Excellency, the Commander of the International Stabilisation Force
Your Excellencies, Members of Parliament
Your Excellencies, Members of Government
Your Excellency, the Chief of the Defence Force of Timor-Leste
Your Excellencies, the Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps
Distinguished Guests,

It is a great pleasure to speak today at this landmark ceremony marking the end of mission of the International Stabilisation Force in Timor-Leste.

This is an important occasion for Timor-Leste, as well as for our friends and partners, Australia and New Zealand.

Following a request made by Timor-Leste in May 2006, the ISF was deployed to our nation to help maintain and restore public order.

At that time, Timor-Leste was experiencing widespread unrest and violence. In the immense and difficult task of building our State, we had stumbled, and we knew that we needed international help to get back on track.

We were fortunate to be able to rely on the great solidarity, as well as the operational readiness, of both Australia and New Zealand.

The arrival of the ISF was welcomed by our people, and the soldiers played an important role in the restoration of normality in our country.

Timor-Leste has now enjoyed many years of peace and security, which has provided a foundation for our country to grow, and from which we can work to build our nation and tackle poverty.

It is thanks to this foundation of security that Timor-Leste was able to move beyond dealing with short term crises, and engage in long term planning to prepare and implement our Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030.

On behalf of the Government and the People of Timor-Leste I give thanks to Australia and New Zealand, and the brave soldiers that served with the ISF, for helping us achieve stability.

As a result we now look to the future with optimism and hope.

The Australian and New Zealand soldiers of the ISF have served our country well. They deserve their reputation as some of the most professional and dedicated soldiers in the world.

The soldiers of the ISF have provided a model for the professional development of the F-FDTL and I am pleased that the Defence Cooperation Program will continue to support the development of our armed forces.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The departure of the ISF also represents a new stage for our nation in which we must take responsibility for our own security and for the future of our country.

We are pleased to witness the increasing effectiveness of the F-FDTL, which has proved to be able to perform the tasks assigned under the Constitution, and to defend our people with professionalism and competence.

As such, today is another proud landmark for our people in the history of our nation.

This ceremony, therefore, is not only a thank you to the generous military support provided by Australia and New Zealand – it also marks an important step for Timor-Leste.

We know that we have many challenges to face, but we can now move forward with dignity, belief and confidence.

Finally, I would like to give a special thanks to all the ISF soldiers that will be leaving our nation.

In recognition of your service and dedication to our country, Timor-Leste is pleased to award you with the Medal of Solidarity.

We trust that you will remember your time in our country, just as our people will always remember the contribution that you have made.

I hope that your return home is a good one and wish you all the best in the future.

Thank you very much.