



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

**ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER  
AND MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND SECURITY  
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO AT THE UP COLLEGE OF LAW,  
UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES**

**“PEACE AND RECONCILIATION – THE TIMORESE EXPERIENCE”**

**7 June 2013  
Manila**

Excellency, Alfredo E. Pascual, President of the University of the Philippines,  
Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be here today in this century-old institution of higher education, which is one of the most prestigious in the region, and a traditional source of leaders and other senior officers of your great country.

I want to thank the UP College of Law for inviting me to speak here today and for hosting this event. As I have never attended university, like you all here today, I feel truly privileged to be able to address you.

This place, as the Dean and Fernando Peña reminded us, holds special meaning for the Timorese struggle, as it was here that the Asia Pacific Coalition for East Timor, better known as APCET was born. APCET was for many years and continues to be a strong advocate for the rights of the Timorese and I am delighted to have caught up with my good friend and long-time freedom fighter of the Timorese cause, Gus Miclat. I still remember when my special representative at the time, José Ramos-Horta came to Manila to attend an APCET meeting and he read my message from Cipinang prison. I was called in by the Indonesian military intelligence and was subjected to a difficult interrogation. But I was glad to know that we had friends on the outside that cared enough to speak out about our cause.

Today's world faces serious problems, problems that could not have been imagined even during the period of the Cold War.

The global recession that is affecting the old continent, as well as the United States of America, is now hindering the development efforts of the poorest countries, at the same time it sends millions of people in the developed countries into unemployment.

The demonstrations, disturbances and acts of violence in these countries, which are finding out the hard way that they cannot hold on to their welfare State, express the feelings of anger in those societies that previously were such vocal advocates of world peace.

The irony here is, of course, that the underdeveloped countries were always viewed as having poor governance practices, while in fact it is the developed countries that have committed such terrible acts of irresponsibility, seriously damaging the lives of their own citizens and jeopardising the survival of hundreds of millions of people, around the world, while at the same time often offending the integrity and sovereignty of weak and poor nations.

The dreams of the Arab Spring have become a nightmare for the region, particularly for the people of Syria. The cries for freedom and democracy, which at once surprised and thrilled the world, have now been stifled by distant echoes of massacred populations,

and forgotten by foreign powers for which dialogue and diplomacy do not satisfy their need to defend their geo-strategic interests.

The circumstances in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate that peace and democracy cannot be imposed through war, and that reconciliation and harmony in the social fabric of the countries in crisis are key factors for peace. As well, Africa continues to bleed internally, in both body and mind.

At the same time, the Asia Pacific region and its successes are discussed by the large and the powerful, the politicians and the economists, the diplomats and the military, and within financial and business circles. I just came from the Shangri-la Dialogue where US-China relations and emerging threats dominated discussions. It is said that this is the “Asian Century”, with the nations of the region coming to dominate global geopolitics and where big powers are fighting for their interests in the region.

However, we all know the challenges we face, from regional tensions to territorial disputes, from nuclear threats to even latent conflicts that may arise with competition for the increasingly needed resources.

It is in this context, in this world turned upside down, that we are talking about Peace and Reconciliation.

It is undoubtedly easier to wage war than to build peace. It is easier to breed mistrust than to show tolerance and mutual understanding between nations, and this is because it has proved easier to safeguard the interests of the powerful few than the wellbeing of the many.

The principles of equality and honesty must be at the forefront of State relations, as they are indispensable in creating and strengthening ties of cooperation based on mutual trust and mutual respect.

We cannot postpone a new world paradigm, since the current system – based on a superficial analysis that is influencing the way in which decisions are made for reducing the suffering of humanity and ensuring a small piece of dignity to each and every human being – has already proven, in my humble opinion, to be unhealthy and unable to secure sustainable long term solutions.

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen,

Timor-Leste, a half island, located in a corner of Southeast Asia where thousands of islands, both large and small, make up Indonesia, and farther south, Australia and the Pacific Islands, also felt the consequences of 20<sup>th</sup> century world history, including the influence of the Cold War.

We were under centuries of Portuguese colonial rule that experienced various revolts. Between 1941 and 1945, despite being short, the Japanese occupation covered the entire territory, causing more than 60,000 deaths.

If you want to believe the researchers, on the history of that time, the Timorese people would not have suffered much if the Australian troops did not come to Timor-Leste, with the objective to stop the invasion of Australia, by the Japanese based in our soil.

Also, according to the researchers, it was already in 1963 that, in Washington, the US, UK, Australia and New Zealand secretly agreed with the integration of Timor-Leste to Indonesia, as the best solution for world peace.

After 400 years of European colonialism, and one year after the Carnation Revolution in Portugal, on 28 November 1975 we unilaterally declared our independence.

However, we Timorese entered into a brief civil war, caused by ideological differences that in part were instigated by foreign interests to annex Timor-Leste. Tragically, nine days later, we were brutally invaded by Indonesia, with the US having given the green light.

Moreover, the terrible 24 year long military occupation would not have lasted so long, had the US, UK, France and Germany not supplied weapons, tanks and aircrafts and training to Indonesian military to improve their combat capabilities, with the aim to exterminate the small guerrilla resistance force.

On the other hand, our neighbour, Australia, was at the time, the only Western country to recognise the annexation. But, worst indeed, Australia signed an agreement with Indonesia to share the resources of the Timor Sea, in 1989.

And it happened at the time when hundreds of thousands of Timorese perished. For more than two decades, the Timorese people suffered and fought alone, without any military support from outside. Timorese families, above all our women and children, experienced deprivations and indescribable abuses.

In many places of Timor-Leste, thousands of my countrymen were killed in systematic wipe-out operations, while hunger, exhaustion and disease slowly took a toll on the survivors.

From our side, it took us some years, and much destruction, before we recognised that we needed to unite the Timorese people around the common ideal of independence, and this required us to reconcile our differences. Although we always sought peace with our occupiers, we were faithful to our motto of “independence or death” and we knew that if we resisted together we would win in the end.

This recognition came from the people themselves, and it is this greatness of spirit, of being able to forgive and reconcile, that has been enabling us to achieve our dreams.

Meanwhile, the Referendum finally took place on 30 August 1999 and the results lead once again to uncontrollable violence by those who could not accept the democratic choice of the majority.

Despite the moral, psychological and political burden, and despite the violence and physical destruction of the already impoverished country, the desire of our people to live in peace did not diminish.

Tolerance overcame vengeance. Forgiveness overcame hatred.

We knew that independence, and the sacrifices of our people, would have no value, and that we could not achieve social harmony, if the hearts of the Timorese were filled with hatred and the desire for revenge.

Peace is more than the end of war! Peace also requires the healing of wounds through pragmatic decisions and policies that end hatred, vengeance and mistrust. Living in peace means being free from these corrosive feelings; it means living reconciled with our enemies, and especially with ourselves, both individually and as a whole.

And so, our people forgave the Timorese sisters and brothers, that fled to Indonesia, asking them to return, even those who had defended and fought for integration, so that together we could build our country. And importantly, the Timorese people vowed to establish a relationship of openness and solidarity with the Indonesian people, so that both Timorese and Indonesian could prosper.

We also understood, through the experiences of other post-conflict countries, that we would be unable to build our Nation if the seeds of hatred and mistrust were planted in our society.

Reconciliation is a prerequisite for national stability, which in turn is a requirement for development.

We created the CAVR (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation), the first reconciliation commission in Asia. We were pioneers in the promotion of human rights, creating a model that determined the truth concerning acts of violence committed in the past and that helped people to deal with that truth.

The reconciliation meetings between the Timorese in 2000, along the Indonesian border, were profound and touched the heart. Not only did the perpetrators acknowledge what they had done, but the victims also forgave them. As a result, thousands of refugees who had fled to Indonesia and feared about their acceptance in an independent Timor-Leste were able to return and were well received by their brothers and sisters.

This was the first decisive step for building our Nation!

In this critical process, we were fortunate to be able to rely on our ancestral tradition of reconciliation, which we call “badame”. “Ba” “dame” literally means “to opt for peace” and is a tradition of public apology in Timor-Leste, with the perpetrator confessing their crimes publicly to the victim, before the elders and the members of the community.

This type of public apology is an indispensable condition for the perpetrator’s reinstatement in the community and for restoring the reputation of the victim, by way of dialogue and with the participation of the entire community.

The reconciliation of each individual with the “other” and with society is largely dependent on their capacity to reconcile with themselves. This is the most difficult part of the reconciliation process, since any bad feelings, any desire for confrontation starts within an individual, not between individuals.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

We have also put the past of our Indonesian occupation behind so that we could reconcile between our two peoples. The crimes were reviewed with great courage, particularly on the part of the victims, and a process of cooperation and friendship was started between both countries. This process has been contributing a great deal to the development of Timor-Leste.

Currently, Indonesia represents more than a close and friendly neighbour. It is also an example of stability, democracy and economic growth that inspires Timor-Leste.

With the establishment of a Commission of Truth and Friendship in Bali, in a joint effort between Timor-Leste and Indonesia, we were able to strengthen this friendship even further and to contribute to peace in Southeast Asia. I believe that our common history, and the difficult process we have endured and overcome, may serve as an example in our region and in the world, as a lesson of peace and reconciliation.

We are now proud to have built relationships of friendship with so many countries in the world, having a foreign policy of ‘zero enemies’. Our relations with our neighbours, Australia and Indonesia, are excellent and we have privileged ties of friendship in Africa, Europe and Latin and South America, as well as, of course, countries of the Asia Pacific.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

People develop when they manage to overcome their own weaknesses.

This is a complex process that takes time. A country taking its first steps on the path towards development, and carrying on its back the heavy burden of a conflicted past, will make mistakes and suffer setbacks.

Indeed, after our independence we entered a vicious cycle of conflict that arose every two years, as if to remind us that peace is a very delicate treasure that requires extreme care.

In Timor-Leste, leaders had to often be reminded that the people, those who sacrificed so that Timor-Leste could become independent, are not yet enjoying the fruits of freedom. Only by being close to the people and understanding their aspirations can we ensure stability and develop the nation.

We needed to secure political will at an institutional level to ensure cooperation in the search for solutions, as otherwise we would lack the realistic judgement to face and solve crises.

It is not easy to learn to live in democracy. The same way that there can be no freedom for people who cannot attain it by themselves, there can be no development if it is not achieved as a result of the effort of a society itself.

In order to break the vicious cycles of conflict we needed permanent and genuine dialogue, as well as cooperation between all Bodies of Sovereignty as well as civil society.

In addition to reconciliation, which was essential, the capacity building of our communities was also a key element necessary for maintaining peace in the country.

It is difficult to ask people to put collective interests ahead of their individual needs, and to take on a new fight with relish – the fight for national development. This, again, requires sacrifice and enormous patience.

This was why in 2009, on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Referendum, we launched a new motto for our Nation: “Goodbye Conflict, Welcome Development”.

Since then, we have been fortunate to live in a new atmosphere of security, stability and confidence in the future. We are implementing our *Strategic Development Plan*, our economic growth rates are among the highest in the world, and we are getting closer to our goal of becoming a full-fledged member of ASEAN.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Each nation has its own context, its own history, its own culture. Independence is always achieved in a unique manner and each development process has its own reality and its own internal factors.

However, I believe that all people yearn for the same thing: to live in peace and harmony.

This is why I believe that dialogue is so important – dialogue within every nation and international dialogue respecting the sovereignty of each country, where the powerful do not seek to impose their interests on the weak and more vulnerable, as if their values are in some way superior, as if their rights are superior.

World peace will never be achieved while political hypocrisy prevails in the background of the western world, creating hatred, conflict, mistrust, desire for revenge and generalised feelings of dissatisfaction. At the Shangri-la Dialogue, I made an appeal to Western countries not to label people, organisations as “enemies” as it does not help to resolve problems. Instead it promotes exclusion, isolation and fears.

We have to move from hostility and mistrust to mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation. International dialogue and multilateral deeds by world leaders must be tireless in seeking this goal.

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen,

Timor-Leste does not forget its responsibilities in regard to consolidating world peace. After we survived through the most difficult pages in our history we were fortunate to receive international assistance, which has enabled us to build our nation and to live in peace and freedom.

Our cause was helped not only by the development partners of Timor-Leste, but also by citizens from all over the world, including the Filipinos and APCET, working alongside us so that peace could reach to every Timorese family, so our dream could become a reality. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jaime de los Santos and Rodolfo Tor who played an important role in our nation building.

This history must not be ignored. Every individual counts. The history of humankind is not only that of the deeds of leaders; instead, we must also acknowledge those anonymous individuals who dedicate their lives to serving others.

Peace, ladies and gentlemen, begins and ends with each one of us.

Before I conclude, I would like to call your attention to a new and important collaboration between many of the fragile nations of the world – the so-called ‘g7+’.

This group was created in 2010 to give a united voice to fragile countries and to seek changes to global development policies. The ‘g7+’ knows from bitter experience that without peace and stability it is impossible to achieve development. Not one fragile or conflict-affected nation in the world has achieved a single Millennium Development Goal.

This means that it will not be possible to eradicate poverty in the world without first addressing the circumstances of fragile and conflict-affected countries. This is why the



'g7+' group of nations are working together to ensure that the post-2015 development agenda responds to the need for peace and stability and that the perspectives of fragile States will be seen as central to world dialogue.

Timor-Leste has the honour of leading this group and putting its experience to the service of all fragile and conflict-affected nations, promoting peace and reconciliation as the means and the ultimate goal of development.

And in 2013 we will support the holding of a Conference in Dili, organised by the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council. The APRC was established last September in Bangkok and its founding members are distinguished individuals from Asia, including my friend José de Venecia, the former Vice President of Indonesia, Jusuf Kalla, and our former President of the Republic, Dr José Ramos-Horta, who is currently the SRSG in Guinea-Bissau.

I have been following with interest the latest developments in the Philippines. The Government and the people of the Philippines have been great supporters of the development of Timor-Leste, and we are lucky to have a large Filipino community in our country helping to build our nation. Indeed, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you personally, and on behalf of the Timorese people, for this support and solidarity.

Last, I would like to pay homage to the Government of the Philippines and to the Moro National Liberation Front for their efforts to find a peaceful, broad and lasting solution to the issues that separate them.

I hope that both will remain steadfast in taking the path of dialogue, since this is the only weapon that can put an end to insurgencies and overcome differences.

I have no doubt that the majority of Christians and Muslim alike desire peace. Maybe the time has come for the peaceful silent majorities to give a hand to the minorities. As I have said before, it is harder to fill a heart with peace than it is to fill it with hatred!

However, by building confidence and promoting tolerance, dialogue and reconciliation, it is possible to achieve a world of peace.

Thank you very much.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão