



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

**ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST EXTRAORDINARY
MEETING OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION OF THE CPLP**

**Noble Hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation,
Dili
17 April 2015**



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

Your Excellency

The Executive Secretary of the CPLP, Ambassador Murade Isaac Murargy

Your Excellencies

The Ministers and Vice-Ministers of Education from the CPLP Member States

Your Excellencies

The Delegation Members from the Member States and CPLP Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great honour and satisfaction that Timor-Leste holds the First Extraordinary Meeting of Ministers of Education from the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, under the motto “CPLP united for inclusive, efficient and effective education systems”.

I would like to seize this opportunity to thank all the illustrious Ministers of Education from our Community, as well as their representatives and delegations, for being here today and for making Dili a city dedicated to education during this week. I must state that it is a great joy for us to greet and to welcome every one of you, and I hope that the many commitments you surely have in your agendas will not prevent you from enjoying a bit of what our country has to offer.

I would also like to praise His Excellency Ambassador Isaac Murargy and the entire Executive Secretariat of the CPLP for the support and dedicated service provided in this meeting, as well as for the ongoing monitoring and collaboration that they have ensured to the work of the CPLP, particularly since last year, when Timor-Leste assumed the rotating presidency of this organization.

For Timor-Leste, presiding over this Community is both a great honour and a great responsibility. It is always a privilege to be able to work together towards a common goal such as the development of each of our peoples.

And one cannot speak of development without speaking of education, which is a cornerstone in any fair, inclusive and prosperous society!

The CPLP is certainly a privileged forum where we can reflect on strategic instruments that contribute to improve the quality of the education systems in our countries, making use of our experiences. Although the challenges we face in this area have different peculiarities, sharing our different perspectives makes for a richer debate.

As such, it is symbolical for us that the First Extraordinary Meeting of Ministers of Education of the CPLP is the first sectorial meeting held under the Timorese presidency. I am certain that education is a priority for all of us, in view of what it entails in terms of potential and of the promise of progress and inclusiveness in our societies.

What we share as brothers and sisters in the CPLP can only, should and will help us to consolidate our development strategy in the area of education, leading us to seize the invaluable contribution that each of us can make so as to project our Community in today's globalized world.

Let us use our history, our culture, our language and the fact that together we represent around 250 million Portuguese speakers in 4 continents to shorten physical distances, while using our geostrategic position to open ourselves to the world. As such, promoting Education within the CPLP and promoting and expanding Portuguese throughout the world are two key components of this strategy, which require investment.

We all know that quality education is the best guarantee for having educated people who are able to contribute to their country's economic and social development, thus strengthening a type of citizenship that is democratic, conscientious and with a true sense of responsibility and social justice. Therefore, this is a *sine qua non* condition if indeed we aspire to a type of progress that benefits everyone.

We must also look to *quality education* and to *Portuguese* as strategic elements that may enhance the economic potential of each of our countries. Education is essential for the emergence of stronger, innovating and entrepreneurial private sectors that can adapt to the challenges of today's globalized world and that can see in the Portuguese language a factor of proximity,

understanding and acceptance, which may even be decisive when establishing businesses and partnerships.

It was not by accident that Timor-Leste assumed “CPLP and Globalization” as the motto for its presidency, and that one of the priorities in the Action Plan is economic and business cooperation. And the truth is that this cooperation is more beneficial for everyone if the workers from our countries have access to quality education and to academic and technical training.

That is why, and speaking specifically of Timor-Leste, we are currently focusing on effectively improving the quality of service delivery in the area of education. As you know, Timor-Leste had to be reborn from the ashes over 13 years ago, and unfortunately the education sector has had to start basically from scratch. Consequently it was necessary to create an entire education system, from infrastructures to school curricula to the training of teachers.

We still have a lot to do and enormous challenges to overcome, but we know that the path entails reaching national consensus on the importance of this sector, so that we may focus for instance on creating a pre-school system that is vital for preparing children to enter school and to start formal learning.

Education is indeed a strategic and transversal area that impacts every sector. A country like Timor-Leste, where over 50% of the population is under 19 years old, needs to focus on the education and on the technical and professional qualification of our young people. Otherwise we will end up facing a problem that will be impossible to solve – that of unemployment. And we already know that unemployment breeds frustration and discontentment, and that it is ultimately a risk to the stability and security of any nation.

As such, we want to continue focusing on technical and vocational schools, so as to truly meet the needs of Timor-Leste. As Timor-Leste is located in a dynamic region, our young people absolutely need to be skilled in order to compete in the labour market.

Educating our peoples means building our Nations! It means enabling our citizens to act in a responsible and participative manner in a future that is made by everyone and for everyone.

We are aware that education systems have been the targets of constant alterations that result from the political, social and economic changes in today's world. The CPLP countries have been adapting to these changes. I believe it is vital that political changes do not cast aside the consummation of education policies, since it takes time and resources to implement them and to have them yield results. Consequently we need to implement, consolidate, invest and give stability to a sector that, although requiring considerable resources, will yield infinitely greater dividends to any nation.

Your Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This has been a very fruitful week for our Community in terms of Education.

The Strategic Plan of Multilateral Cooperation on CPLP Education, as well as the CPLP Action Plan for 2015-2020, which has just been approved, boost education and training. This enhances human resources and enables all of us to share transversal goals and multilateral cooperation.

I believe that this Strategic Plan constitutes an historical opportunity to launch the education sector in each of our societies into a new global era in which our common agenda acknowledges the interconnection between the education system and technical and professional education, so that education may become a garden of talents where creativity, the arts, technology and entrepreneurship itself can be nurtured.

We know that there are many challenges and for all of us.

In view of its history, Timor-Leste has an additional challenge in terms of education and the Portuguese language. Naturally, the fact that we were unable to use it for over twenty years meant that our young people and our very education system now have difficulty in mastering it. Portuguese always had great symbolical value during our struggle for independence and will always be a priority in our agenda, even if today it presents certain challenges.

The Timorese government will be continuing the initiatives foreseen in the 2010 Brasília action plan and in the 2013 Lisbon action plan. Consequently, in 2016 the Timorese presidency will be holding the Third International Conference on Portuguese Language in the world, to take place in Dili. The

meetings held this week already enabled important reflections that will feed this commitment.

We want to continue following this path, and for this we rely on the valuable and fruitful sharing of experiences between us all. We also want to continue having cooperation, so that none of the nine CPLP countries, particularly those that are more fragile, is left behind in this development process.

Thus I look forward to a productive session today, so that this new Strategic Plan for education may further intensify our experiences and cooperation and may enable us to fulfil our common aspirations in the area of education.

Thank you very much.

17 April 2015

Dr Rui Maria de Araújo