



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

**SPEECH BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO
ON THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE SECOND CPLP CIVIL
SOCIETY FORUM**

**“The economic value of the Common Identity
of the CPLP Civil Society”**

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



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

Your Excellencies

The Representatives from the CPLP Civil Society, Churches and Non-governmental Organizations

Your Excellency

The Cooperation Director from the CPLP Executive Secretariat

Your Excellencies

The CPLP Delegates

Ladies and gentlemen,

Please allow me to start by saying that we are all to be congratulated. Our Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries turns 19 today. For 19 years the CPLP has been bringing our countries together and increasingly making us a family. This is also a day of great honour for Timor-Leste, as the host of the second CPLP Civil Society Forum, after Brazil held the first one in 2011.

For this past week, representatives from various entities, organizations and social movements from every CPLP country have met in Dili. I hope that the cultural events and the work in which they have taken part have led to a fruitful sharing of experiences, ideas and synergies in order to acknowledge and enhance “The economic value of the Common Identity of the CPLP Civil Society”, which coincidentally is the theme of this meeting.

Within each of our countries, citizens in general, as well as free and non-partisan Civil Society organizations and churches, should be called upon to work in close partnership with the Government.

Non-governmental organizations, labour organizations, the media and other Civil Society representatives play a vital role in monitoring the execution of Government policies, contributing to the development and improvement of the living standards of society.

The vitality of democracy is also achieved through the participation of Civil Society organizations and through the promotion of a plural, participative, inclusive and mature society. The existence of a dynamic and diversified society is a sign of democratic maturity and an asset in itself, since it contributes to the clarification of ideas and moves society forward.

As such, and since everyone is called upon to take part in the transformation and construction of our countries, it is urgent to act in a serious and responsible manner, as well as promote honest dialogue between the Government and Civil Society. This is the only way we will be able to find a more responsible form of operation that will benefit everyone.

Encouraging Civil Society to be more dynamic and to have stronger interaction with the Government, the business sector and international organizations will only benefit the country and the people. Civil Society can be a valuable partner to the Government, complementing its actions in terms of delivering services to the population. It can also have a monitoring role leading to a reflection on Government activities, which can enable social progress.

In Timor-Leste we are aware of the importance of Civil Society to national development. Even before our independence, Civil Society organizations played a vital role in the struggle for national liberation. As such, every Government so far has relied on active participation by Civil Society, with the Sixth Constitutional Government maintaining the commitment of working closely alongside these organizations.

We have already created accountability mechanisms and the next step will be involving Civil Society and the citizens more directly in the supervision and auditing of Government spending. This will entail the creation of operational methodologies.

In April of this year we signed a funding agreement with 20 Civil Society organizations, seeking to promote their participation in a range of sectors, so as to increase the wellbeing of the population. This support must be managed responsibly, so as to benefit everyone and to improve the living situation of our people.

We have also encouraged Civil Society to play an active part in governance, by creating the mechanism known as Social Audit. The goal of this mechanism is to have a rigorous, independent and accountable assessment, leading to better service delivery.

The Government has already started promoting Social Audits and working alongside Civil Society. In May we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with FONGTIL, which represents Civil Society organizations and encourages them to develop a model of Social Audits that fits our context and our reality. We are focusing in key areas such as agriculture, education, health and basic infrastructures, since these are the ones that have an impact on the daily lives of the population, promoting direct involvement by Civil Society in the monitoring and tracking of Government policies and projects. Therefore, we need Civil Society organizations to carry out their evaluations -to issue their comments and constructive criticisms - and we need to encourage open dialogue between such organisations and Government.

Social audits will enable Civil Society and citizens to play an active role in the various policy drafting stages, from development to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This allows us to make sure that programmes and policies aimed at providing more and better services to the population, do so in an efficient and effective manner.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our Community has been providing many fruitful meetings between our States, enabling our leaders as a whole to strive to find policies that promote the construction of a democratic and prosperous society that will benefit our peoples.

Nevertheless, we must underline that CPLP is also a Community dedicated to integrating peoples and that Civil Society is represented in the public arena, thus bringing its democratic role to light.

CPLP Civil Society may therefore use language and shared principles to further improve democracy within the Community. Since it is not bound by borders, it can contribute to decision-making in terms of transnational governance or intergovernmental organizations.

Additionally, Civil Society organizations from the nine countries, as well as CPLP Civil Society as a whole, share the need to harmonize practices and guidance. Sharing visions and actions may be mutually beneficial, strengthening Civil Society in our Community and thereby contributing to the further improvement of the living standards in each of our countries.

The contribution made towards the consolidation of democracy in certain countries can and should be used to address the social concerns affecting all CPLP countries, thus leading to greater collaboration between Civil Society and Government.

Having CPLP Civil Society take part in regional and international forums strengthens CPLP and makes its voice heard by all stakeholders, not just States and Governments. Having Civil Society participate at this level displays the plurality of ideas that make up the common space of CPLP, therefore signifying acknowledgement of the need to work towards democratic inclusiveness across all the nations which comprise the CPLP.

For the duration of the Forum we have had the opportunity to debate social issues that have a significant impact on the development of our populations and our countries. Exploring the potential of the Portuguese language and culture to build socioeconomic and cultural partnerships between our countries and to develop sustainable projects, will allow us to maximise the educational, social and economic development of our populations.

It must also be considered that promoting cultural, professional and economic exchange within Civil Society by way of business innovation, training of human resources and sociocultural interaction has positive effects in the development of each CPLP nation. These new dynamics of social entrepreneurship and partnerships between the private sector and Civil Society contribute to make us more prepared to meet the challenges we face, such as access to education, access to health and the fight against hunger.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A few hours ago we witnessed the approval of the CPLP Civil Society Forum statutes and the election of its Secretariat comprised of Arsénio Pereira from Timor-Leste, Idalfredo Almeida from Cape Verde, António Andrade from Portugal, Fernando Cupertino from Brazil

and Saquina Mucavede from Mozambique, and the Fiscal Council with representatives from Angola, Cape Verde and Portugal. This was a highlight of the event and was a crucial step towards strengthening of this Forum.

I am certain that the work done this week will lead many more meetings and breathe new life into Civil Society, its representativeness and its role in the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries - within the context of the social, cultural and economic globalization - overall, seeking to improve wellbeing in our communities.

Citizen participation and joint work are benefits that will affect everyone.

I would like to conclude by thanking everyone again for your contribution and participation, and by wishing safe returns to all those who will soon be leaving for their home countries!

Thank you very much.

Dr Rui Maria de Araújo
17 July 2015