



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

**SPEECH BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE,
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO,
AT THE THIRD CPLP ORDINARY MEETING
OF MINISTERS OF SEA AFFAIRS**

**“The multisectoral dialogue to expand blue economy in a context of
cooperation for the conservation and sustainable use of seas and
oceans”**

**Dili
18 May 2016**



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

Your Excellencies,

The Minister of State, Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs and Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries

The CPLP Ministers of Sea Affairs and their representatives

The CPLP Executive Secretary

Fellow Government Members

Distinguished,

Members from Member State Delegations and the CPLP Executive Secretariat

Representatives from CPLP Associated Observers

Representatives from the Diplomatic Corps and the Civil Society

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great satisfaction for Timor-Leste to be hosting another sector meeting as the rotating President of our Community. As such, I would like to thank the illustrious Ministers from the other CPLP countries, as well as their representatives and respective delegations, for taking part in this third meeting that covers such a vital subject as the issues of seas and oceans.

Although the last few days have been quite busy, I hope that you have had the opportunity to see a little of our country and its natural beauty, which undoubtedly includes the colour and peace of the surrounding sea.

Indeed, the seas occupy over 70% of planet Earth, which can also be called “the blue planet”. As such, they should not and must not be neglected in any way.

Today the international, regional and national framework of the issues of the sea is characterised by the consolidation of the importance of classical matters, which are traditionally associated with the sea, and by the emergence of new global challenges resulting from globalisation and constant technological innovation.

The increasing political, economic, social and military interdependence of the States, as a result of the greater complexity of international relations, also implies greater sharing of assets and information resulting from one of the oldest principles regulating State relationships: the principle of the liberty of the seas. This principle of liberty, on which global economy relies, is so important that today’s maritime trade transactions represent 90% of world trade.

The living and non-living resources of the sea hold enormous potential. These, together with the increasing scarcity of onshore resources, are making States increasingly interested, particularly in terms of expanding their jurisdiction offshore.

As a result of scientific investigation and new techniques for exploiting the sea, States are increasingly aware of the importance of expanding their continental shelf, seeking to increase their jurisdiction over an Area that would traditionally be considered to belong to the whole of humanity.

For nations, their jurisdiction over the sea and the respective marine soil and subsoil are as important as their land area. All countries should exercise their rights of sovereignty so that they may exploit and benefit from their living and non-living resources.

Evidently, all this exploitation of the sea requires global concern over how these matters are regulated. This is a challenge that cannot be ignored. The issues of the sea must be approached in a crosscutting and multisector way, since they have impact on the areas of defence and security, the environment, science, technology, social affairs and economics.

States should also comply with the principle that the sea should be used for peaceful purposes. This principle is jeopardised by conducting illegal military exercises, using the sea to smuggle human beings, guns and illicit substances, piracy, attacks against ships and overfishing as a result of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing activities.

Efforts have been made at international level to respond to these global issues and challenges. I am referring for instance to the work being done in terms of international regulation, such as the adoption of several international conventions related with issues of the sea, the intervention by the International Maritime Organisation and the adoption of the new Sustainable Development Goal seeking to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Here it is also important to praise the role played by the International Court over the Law of the Sea, which will be completing 20 years of existence later this year, and its President who is in Timor-Leste at the moment to participate in the International Conference of Dili, which is happening tomorrow.

Your Excellencies,

In view of the above, the sea plays a vital role all over the world. This is also reflected at national and regional level, as well as in our Community. Different regional cooperation strategies regarding maritime affairs, namely in terms of maritime security, fighting against illegal fishing, fighting against piracy, and partnerships for protecting the environment and biodiversity encompass all areas of the world.

In ASEAN, for instance, these issues are both central to the internal agenda of the Organisation and discussed in the ASEAN Regional Forum, in which Timor-Leste recently had the opportunity to participate.

CPLP countries are coastal countries, representing over 7.5 million km² in 3 oceans. Although it is the sea that separates us physically, it is also the sea that binds us together

through its historical and cultural meaning. The fact that some of us are islands or even a “half-island”, like in the case of Timor-Leste, makes us depend from the sea in various ways.

The stability of the world and of our nations depends from maritime security and from the fight against different types of threats, as we have already covered. As such, it is essential to have proper resource management, in compliance with the sovereignty principles of the States, so that there may be true sustainable development that contributes to strengthen the economies of our countries.

Consequently the issues of the sea are increasingly becoming strategic areas for development and cooperation, as proved by the institutionalisation of these sector meetings in 2010, under the Portuguese Presidency, and by the approval of the CPLP Strategy for the Oceans.

This Strategy contains the key cornerstones for our development and strengthening as a Community through the seas. It reflects the strategic priorities and the governance sector areas on which we should focus, in view of their connection to the sea.

Its holistic and crosscutting vision made Timor-Leste accept, within the scope of its presidency, the challenge of leading the process to create an Action Plan for implementing the CPLP Strategy for the Oceans. This is a Plan that favours bilateral and multilateral cooperation and that encompasses the global commitment contained in Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 17, therefore strengthening global partnerships and the conservation and use of the oceans for sustainable development.

Although it is still subject to debate, I believe that this Plan, which results from the challenge put forward last year at the II Extraordinary Meeting of Ministers of Sea Affairs, may be approved by you today.

Your Excellencies,

Because Timor-Leste is an archipelagic State, the issues of the sea take on a vital importance for us Timorese. As you know, we are striving under the international law and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to obtain definitive delimitation of our maritime borders, so as to enable us to ensure our full sovereignty.

It is essential that countries know their terrestrial and maritime borders, so that they may fulfil their potential and diversify their economies through fishing activities and by developing tourism and their non-living resources.

Our full sovereignty is vital so that we can use the potential of the economics of the sea in favour of our people, contributing in a very direct and immediate way to their nourishment and food security, as well as to sustainability in the medium term and long term.

The definitive delimitation of our maritime borders is indeed a national priority for Timor-Leste, but it is not the only one.

The Government is committed to creating a National Maritime Authority that is able to ensure governance in terms of maritime security and protection. We have started the process for building a new port in Tibar and we are focusing on developing this sector, so as to ensure that all international safety and security rules are met so enabling Timor-Leste to take advantage of its strategic position – being located in the confluence of important international maritime routes between the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean – so as to possibly become a strategic hub in Southeast Asia.

We are also studying ways to cooperate with neighbouring countries in order to respond to issues related with illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Last year we approved the legal bases for covering protected maritime areas, seeking to safeguard marine and environmental biodiversity. This is one of our greatest resources and the reason why many tourists visit us.

Just a few days ago, working together with the Civil Society, we have launched a national campaign against marine debris. This initiative is already taking place under the scope of the present Meeting and seeks to be a legacy to our future generations.

It is also essential to raise the awareness of our generations regarding the crosscutting potential and importance of the seas in our countries and in the world, particularly for maritime nations such as Timor-Leste, in which most of our resources are located in the seas.

Your Excellencies,

The timing for this III Meeting of Ministers of Sea Affairs could not have been any better. Indeed, it takes place on a week that is full of important events for Timor-Leste.

Tomorrow the CPLP Ministers of Defence will meet to discuss one of the most important aspects of our cooperation. Dili is also hosting an international conference on maritime borders and the Law of the Sea.

On 20 May we will be proud to celebrate the Restoration of our Independence. This was the event that enabled us to be the country we are today. We would not be here otherwise.

As such, I want to thank you again for travelling to Timor-Leste. I wish you a productive day of work and a safe return home!

Thank you very much.

18 May 2016
Dr Rui Maria de Araújo