



**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 LAUNCH OF THE TIMOR-LESTE POLICY PAPER ON  
MARITIME BOUNDARIES**

**Dili  
29 August 2016**



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

Distinguished Members of our National Parliament

Members of Government

Members of the Council for the Final Delimitation of Maritime Boundaries

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

It is my pleasure to be here today to launch Timor-Leste's landmark Policy Paper on maritime boundaries.

This document tells the story of Timor-Leste's struggle for sovereign rights over our seas – from the past to the present, and what it means for the future.

The Paper summarises the relevant principles of the law of the sea and sets out Timor-Leste's position on where its maritime boundaries should lie under international law.

Today, as we launch this document to share our story with the world, Timor-Leste is also presenting its case publicly at an open hearing at the Peace Palace in The Hague. This is part of our compulsory conciliation proceedings with Australia, which we initiated to resolve our dispute on maritime boundaries.

In approximately 20 minutes time, our Chief Negotiator for Maritime Boundaries, Minister Xanana Gusmão, will take to the stand in The Peace Palace, to present Timor-Leste's story before the conciliation commission.

He will be joined by our Minister of State and of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, His Excellency Agio Pereira, as our Agent on the case, and by the CEO of the Maritime Boundary Office, Elizabeth Exposto, as our Deputy Agent.

The hearing today is being webcast live on the internet for the world to see, and technology permitting, we will be able to watch our Chief Negotiator's presentation here on the screens shortly.

As you know, establishing maritime boundaries is a national priority for the Timor-Leste Government.

I am proud to be here today - as the open hearing at the compulsory conciliation is about to commence - to launch the Timor-Leste Policy Paper.

This is truly an historic occasion.

This document gives a succinct overview of our history as a nation, the history of our maritime boundary issues, a summary of the relevant international law and, importantly, our position on where we believe our maritime boundaries should be drawn, in accordance with international law.

Timor-Leste became the 191<sup>st</sup> member of the United Nations on 20 May 2002, and we remain one of the newest nations in the world.

Since then we have come a long way and have much to be proud of. We have consolidated a vibrant democracy with open markets and the rule of law. We have built the foundations of a successful State, secured peace and stability and enjoyed strong economic growth.

Our nation has been built on the resilience and determination of the Timorese people, and the support of many international partners.

But, our struggle for sovereignty is not over. The final frontier is Timor-Leste's maritime territory.

We are yet to finalise maritime boundaries with either neighbour: Indonesia and Australia.

Timor-Leste and Indonesia have become close friends and remain a global model of reconciliation. Indonesia and Timor-Leste have agreed to bilaterally negotiate maritime boundaries in accordance with international law. These discussions have started.

Australia, however, has refused to negotiate with us, despite our invitations. And they withdrew from the relevant compulsory dispute settlement procedures under the United Nations law of the Sea in 2002 – on the eve of the restoration of our independence.

This deprived us of our right to have an independent umpire resolve this issue.

Until now.

In April Timor-Leste initiated compulsory conciliation. The compulsory conciliation process has been designed specifically for cases such as Timor-Leste's, where we are in dispute with a country who has withdrawn from the binding dispute settlement procedures.

The compulsory conciliation commission is constituted of five eminent, independent experts - from Canada, Germany, Australia, Sierra Leone and Denmark.

They will hear from both parties and understand the facts and each country's position. If during that time we cannot reach an agreement, the commission will provide a report to the United Nations Secretary General, with recommendations on reaching a resolution.

Australia and Timor-Leste would then be obliged to negotiate in good faith on the basis of the commission's report.

We are confident that through this process we can achieve a settlement of our maritime boundaries. We are confident we can do this in a way that brings Australia and Timor-Leste together in a spirit of cooperation and trust, based on good will and international law.

Permanent maritime boundaries are very important for the people of Timor-Leste.

They will provide certainty for many of our industries including customs, security, immigration services, tourism and fisheries.

This certainty will strengthen confidence and encourage business and investment and lead to more jobs. This, in turn, will boost our economy and contribute to building a prosperous future for our people.

I am pleased to launch this Policy Paper - on behalf of the Government of Timor-Leste - as it outlines exactly what Timor-Leste is seeking and why.

In clearly setting out our position, this paper tells our story. I believe it will become an authoritative statement on the relevant history and law of the sea, as it applies to our case.

The first section is an overview, or executive summary, and this is available in three languages - Tetum, Portuguese and English.

The paper features a critical section that outlines where Timor-Leste's maritime boundary should lie, in accordance with international law. This is accompanied by a map that shows Timor-Leste's maritime claims under international law.

This Paper is for our people and also for an international audience.

I believe this document will become a useful tool for many of our guests here today, including those from Government, civil society, the academic community and business leaders.

Each guest here will receive a copy of the Policy Paper. It will also be hosted on the Maritime Boundary Office website.

I encourage everyone to read this document and share it with your friends. The very purpose of this document is to reach a large and broad audience.

I'd like to thank you for your attendance and attention today, and for your support for Timor-Leste's efforts to achieve permanent maritime boundaries in the Timor Sea.

Together we will achieve our sovereign rights and secure the future of our people.

Thank you very much.

29 August 2016  
Dr Rui Maria de Araújo