



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

**DINNER REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE,
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO,
CELEBRATING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE AWARDING OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE
TO TWO SONS OF TIMOR-LESTE**

**Hotel Timor, Díli
October 8, 2016**



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

Nobel Prize Laureates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Firstly, can I thank you all for contributing so enthusiastically and constructively to our understanding of '*The Importance of Poverty Reduction to Consolidate Peace*', the subject that has been intensively workshopped at the conference over the last two days.

I would particularly like to thank the Nobel Laureates for sharing their time and their knowledge. You continue to inspire us; to give us faith in the promise of humanity; and to teach us not only of our own world, but of the mysteries beyond.

Tonight, we celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to His Excellency Dr. José Ramos-Horta and The Most Reverend Bishop Belo.

These two sons of Timor-Leste demonstrated remarkable courage and commitment to the freedom of our people. They dared to stand up and challenge the world in defence of our right to self-determination.

José Ramos-Horta kept our cause on the United Nations agenda for 24 long years. He pounded the corridors of the UN and never gave up. He was the leader of our diplomatic front and while exiled from his homeland he devoted every moment of his life to achieving our freedom.

Bishop Belo was here in Timor-Leste, risking his life to speak up for our people.

He was saying Mass at a school in Dili when the prize was announced in Norway. His response was to say that the prize belonged to all the people of Timor-Leste. He said "it honours all of those who work for peace, for reconciliation, for openness and for the defense of human rights."

Friends

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

At a time when it was easier to be blind than to see, they made the world take note of what was happening in our country. If not for their unwavering dedication, we would not be here today.

We have not, however, come here just to honour them. We are here to hold up their example of sacrifice for the Timorese people to be inspired by, and to live by.

The awarding of the Nobel Prize to these two sons of Timor was a great boost to our struggle. In the awarding of the prize, the world put faith in our people and demonstrated the confidence they had in our desire for peace.

We must continue to respect this confidence; and acknowledge the duty of every Timorese to uphold peace as a way of honouring the recognition the world gave to these two remarkable men.

Nobel Peace Prize Laureates
Ladies and gentlemen

The Timorese people have experienced the brutality of conflict; its sickening violence and the damage to people and families. Even after independence, we suffered a cycle of unrest and conflict.

However, we have now come together in a shared commitment to peace. We are now focused on developing our country and securing its long term future.

But the challenges to sustain peace remain very real. Every day too many of our people suffer from absolute poverty and miserable living conditions. Too many experience extreme disadvantage, without access to decent health care, education, housing or jobs.

We all know that it will not be possible to sustain peace in Timor-Leste without addressing these challenges. Without improving the lives of our people, we risk falling back into unrest and conflict.

And so, it is important that we continue the struggle – and recognise that the effort required to build a peaceful and prosperous nation is equal to the challenge we faced in securing our freedom.

It is also critical that we complete our unfinished journey to independence and achieve sovereign rights over both our land and our sea.

We must confront the historical inequities that continue to choke our nation so that we can achieve permanent maritime boundaries that are fair and equitable. It is only then that we will be able to secure a sustainable future for our people.

Dr. José Ramos-Horta and Bishop Belo have shown us the way. In representing the spirit of the Timorese people, we must follow their lead, and build on their legacy, to secure long term peace.

Nobel Peace Prize Laureates
Ladies and gentlemen

Thank you again for your contribution this week and for your confidence in our nation's future.

For our international guests, we thank you for the solidarity you have shown with our people and for your commitment to our country. We wish you a safe journey home, all the best in your endeavours and we hope to see you back in our country not in a very distant time.

Before I close I invite you all to stand up, rise your glasses for the peace in Timor and all our world.

Thank you very much.

October 8, 2016
Dr Rui Maria de Araújo