



PRIME
MINISTER

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE PARTNERSHIP FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
BETWEEN TIMOR-LESTE AND AUSTRALIA**

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08 March 2017

Ambassador Peter Doyle
Members of the Government
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Distinguished guests
Ladies and gentlemen

It is a pleasure to be here today to talk about the important partnership between Timor-Leste and Australia to enhance human development.

Timor-Leste's government is thankful that Australia's Partnership for Human Development shares our goal to build and sustain a healthy, educated and prosperous population in Timor-Leste. This represents an invaluable tribute to the strong bonds between the two countries.

In fact, the strong diplomatic relationship between Australia and Timor-Leste is built on even stronger people to people relations.

These were forged during the Second World War, and then consolidated in 1999 through INTERFET.

As such, it gives me great honor to join, Ambassador Peter Doyle, representing the government of Australia, and everyone else here today, to celebrate our close cooperation and to chart a new partnership for future development.

Australia was the first of our development partners to adopt *Timor-Leste's Strategic Development Plan, 2011-2030* as the framework for its development assistance. Since then, we have both incorporated the vision for a sustainable future set out in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We believe in the potential of our people, and particularly our young people. Nearly two thirds of our population is under twenty-five. We are harnessing the potential of our young people to propel our country forward.

We have countless young people with extraordinary talents and energy that will strengthen our journey towards sustainable development and sustainable economic growth. The dancing group here today is a great example. Yet, let me mention another great example. A 15-year-old girl from Manufahi was recently celebrated in Indonesia for her talents as a musician. With neither experience, nor professional training, she came fourth, behind 3 contestants from Indonesia in an international singing contest. Her success has been matched by the success of our students in academic institutions around the world,

including Australia, some of whom is standing here in front of us today and the many young people who are now actively contributing to our nation-building.

We can all be proud that despite massive challenges, as a result of our collective efforts we have produced a functioning state in our short 15-years of self-rule.

We are all working towards a world where the next great leader of our nation could be a child from a rural village, once battling malnutrition and unable to attend school. To achieve this vision we need to ensure that this imaginary child can grow up to reach his or her full potential.

By investing in human development, we will hope to create pathways for everyone to reach their full potential. Investing in our people is the key to a secure and prosperous Timor-Leste, that is also fair and progressive.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The *Strategic Development Plan* sets out a bold vision for 2030 where our people will be literate, knowledgeable and skilled. Where they will be healthy and live long, productive lives and actively participate in the economic, social and political development, promoting social equality and national unity. We want Timor-Leste to be among the group of upper middle income countries of the world and we are determined to face the challenges ahead so that we can realize this vision. This Government, as the governments before it, places great importance on human development.

Last month we celebrated the second anniversary of the Sixth Constitutional Government. And over the last two years, the Sixth Constitutional Government has demonstrated its commitment to addressing the nation's immediate needs, particularly in the social sector, building on the achievements of the previous governments. We have tackled malaria. We have improved our school enrolment rates. We have expanded our health services to provide more coverage to our people and through programs such as Saúde na Família, we will ensure that no one is left behind as we move towards a more prosperous future. Our efforts to reform our public administration, our legislative agenda and our economic policy, are all geared towards improving of the lives of our people.

We have also taken a balanced approach to long-term national development, by investing in infrastructure, to create a prosperous economy which will sustain our continued investment in our people. And we are now working to also resolve our maritime boundaries limit in the Timor Sea with Australia through a United Nations conciliation process in a spirit of friendship and cooperation. And we are also working with Indonesia to finalise our land border and then delimit our maritime boundary. All of this have done with view to bring to all prosperity for Timor-Leste.

We have much to be proud of – with determination and rigour we have built our state and established institutions, that are improving the lives of our people. We are proud to be creating a Timor-Leste where everyone can achieve his or her dreams.

However, there remains much to be done to ensure everyone is part of this development process.

We want all Timorese – women, girls, men, boys and people living with disabilities – to benefit and have opportunities to make a better life for themselves and develop the nation. As a medical doctor, I am cognizant of the importance of investing in human development – and this includes health, education, water, sanitation, nutrition, gender, disability and social protection. We all know that these sectors need to work in an integrated fashion to collectively reach their full potential. And we also know that other sectors such as peace and security, infrastructure and household income also play important roles in this process.

Having a state of the art education system, for example, is wonderful. But if the children are sick, due to poor water and sanitation, they will not go to school. Or, if they do not have a meal before going to school, their school performance would be jeopardised. Or the road is bad, or if there is no bridge over a much difficult-to-cross river, or if there is no security in the area, school attendance will drop. Only by working together across all sectors we can close the gaps in our society and make a real and lasting difference to our people's lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you all know, the Sixth Constitutional Government has adopted the Sustainable Development Goals and is deeply committed to achieving the objectives of this global agenda. Both the Strategic Development Plan and the SDGs share a lot in common, and promise to put in place a better world for everyone, if not in the all world at least in Timor-Leste, by 2030.

To achieve the targets of the SDGs, we have prioritized the goals on human development. We are focusing on programs that aim to reduce poverty, improve food security and nutrition, health and education, gender equality and water and sanitation. These programs are central to our belief that pathways towards economic progress and environmental protection are easier when navigated by a healthy, well-educated and well trained population. Under these conditions, individuals are better prepared to make choices in their lives and actively participate in the development of our country. This belief is also a founding principle of our Strategic Development Plan.

The Australia Timor-Leste Partnership for Human Development presents a great opportunity for aligning development partner's support to Timor-Leste's priorities, and for galvanising better synergies within sectors. I am confident that this innovative approach to our partnership will make a difference in the delivery of services to our community.

In addition to all these, ladies and gentlemen, I am particularly pleased that one of the core pillars of the Partnership for Human Development is to support gender equality and women's empowerment. Supporting and empowering our women has been a priority for our successive governments.

And today, ladies and gentlemen, is International Women's Day. PHD should be focus on empowering women and equality in this country. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all women around the world, and particularly Australian and Timorese Women on this special day, and also state that the Timor-Leste government will double efforts to enhance gender equality and to empower all Timorese women and girls to achieve their full potential.

The dancing that we witnessed today represented a balanced gender participation. But if we look to the institution tasks women were doing mainly the chores of cleaning rice and men left to eating. The good news is that when it comes to working together to, I can't find the word in English for that, to make sure the rice is separated from, with the dancing "tebe", men and women work together. In fact in some of our ethnolinguistic groups men will do that and women will do the cleaning of rice with the "lafatin". But this culture represents that our society, particularly our culture society, has different minds, different mentality about men in our society. We hope that with PHD academics, PHD's also, these programs, these things will change in the future.

I wish all the best luck for the successful implementation of this partnership and please count on my support to ensure that this PHD delivers what it is supposed to deliver.

Let me close my remarks by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to the Australian Government and the Australian people for their continued commitment to support the sustainable development of Timor-Leste and its people. May God bless Australia and Timor-Leste.

Thank you.

08 March 2017

Dr Rui Maria de Araújo