



PRIME
MINISTER

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY
THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE,
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO,
AT THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE
3RD NATIONAL CONGRESS ON EDUCATION**

**“Education as a cornerstone for consolidating our Identity and
developing our Nation”**

Dili
17 May 2017

Your Excellencies

The Minister of State, Coordinator of Social Affairs and Minister of Education

The Vice Minister of Education

Members of Parliament and fellow Government members

The Former Ministers of Education of Timor-Leste and the Former Minister of Higher Education of Cape Verde

Reverend Fathers and Reverend Mothers

Dear Sirs and Madams

Representatives from the Diplomatic Corps and development partners

Representatives from Churches and the Civil Society

Illustrious Vice-Rectors of the Universities of Timor-Leste

Teachers, parents, education professionals and students

Lecturers and moderators

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is nice to see we still have a full house at the end of a non-partisan Congress. Since partisan congresses tend to muster more people than other congresses, I assume that this means we are all partisan when it comes to policies for improving the quality of education in Timor-Leste.

Having several former Ministers of Education in attendance, from different political sectors, shows us that education is more important than political parties.

I would like to start by thanking each and every one of you for the work you have done over the past 3 days of the National Congress on Education, which comes to a close today. I also want to thank you for the groundwork that started almost 1 year ago, which made it possible for us to have held this Congress in which we had debated and exchanged ideas, resulting in a set of recommendations that has just been read aloud, as part of the Final Declaration of the 3rd National Congress on Education.

The work done by education civil servants was determinant. Without it we would not have the “Diagnosis of 6 key education areas”, which was presented in a clear and concise manner by the Minister of State, Coordinator of Social Affairs and Minister of Education on the first day of the Congress.

As you are aware, having a diagnosis is very important. And speaking as a medical doctor, having a good diagnosis is even more important – even vital. Indeed, the first thing a medical doctor does is conduct an assessment, or a critical review of the symptoms, the history and the empiric results of physical and complementary exams, so as to arrive at a diagnosis seeking, inasmuch as possible, to understand what is causing the health complication, so as to be able to propose an effective therapy.

Now, a clinical diagnosis is the most important thing to do when dealing with a patient. However, it is also the most difficult thing to do, and it is not always exempt from subjectivity.

The *leges artis*, or the ultimate good practice, states that a good diagnosis is required for an effective therapy.

Likewise, a social diagnosis as the one required in Education must identify the problem in an objective and realistic manner in order to be able to reach an effective solution. Still, one could say that realism and objectivity are not always among the virtues of social diagnosis processes.

If we can compare the two, the difference between a medical diagnosis and a diagnosis in the area of Education is that, in most cases, the medical diagnosis has to be made promptly, while the diagnosis in the area of Education should probably take its time in order to enable society to correct that which is not achieving the desired outcomes, so that we may ultimately achieve our vision of having an educated population that lives to its fullest potential.

And this was what the Technical Groups tried to achieve in the area of Education, in a responsible and inclusive manner. For each of the six key areas the Technical Groups assessed the various components, identified strengths and weaknesses, acknowledged the challenges that still persist after all the progress that has been made, and issued recommendations seeking to overcome those challenges.

Your Excellencies
Ladies and gentlemen

We have received the proposals in the areas of National Education Curriculum; teacher management and training; school administration and inspection; education infrastructure, equipment and resources; public and private Higher Education management; participation by parents, the community, the private sector and other partners.

We have taken notice of the recommendations on the use of the official languages as vehicles for communication, education and transmission of knowledge; and on the establishment of a National Education Council to which is allocated a Specialised Scientific Committee.

As for the challenge concerning teacher training, your recommendation is to study the possibility of expanding CAFE, aligning initial teacher training with the National Curriculum, establishing an ongoing training management policy and conducting a national diagnosis for assessing the needs in terms of initial and ongoing teacher training.

School administration and inspection could be improved by a standardised teacher training programme and a School Administration and Management standard for every education level.

It would also be convenient to conduct a diagnosis on every school infrastructure, while establishing a minimum number of school infrastructures and equipment, such as libraries, laboratories, cafeterias and others, as well as to maintain those infrastructures in order to provide our students with proper learning conditions.

As for the last key areas, it would be important to diversify the supply in Higher Education, for instance by making Polytechnic education a priority, as well as to promote Parent and Teacher Associations and partnerships between private and public schools and the Catholic Church, so as to contribute to the academic education and moral upbringing of our students.

And these are just a few of the over 35 recommendations contained in the Final Declaration.

Your Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

Education, as I have said at the Opening Session, is both “a higher value” and a national priority of common interest for us all. The proposals made in this Congress may assist us in achieving the goals of the 2nd stage of implementation of the 2011-2030 Strategic Development Plan and Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

A cornerstone such as Education is not solidified in a day, as our older brother Dr José Ramos-Horta said on the first day of this event, “Education is always one of the most problematic sectors, both in developing as in developed countries.”

For the time being, this Congress has achieved its goal. Subjects have been discussed in a manner that was healthy and in accordance with the national interest, leading to a proposed therapy.

Consequently the Government, through the Ministry of Education, will strive to socialise the Final Declaration of the 3rd National Congress on Education at national level by the end of its mandate. It will also convey the importance of these recommendations to the next Government.

Before I conclude, I would like to praise the Organising Committee and all those who were involved in the technical groups for the professional and responsible manner in which work has been conducted.

I want to thank our brothers and sisters from the CPLP for their constant support, particularly Portugal and Brazil, as well as Cuba, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America, Japan and other development partners in this sector, such as UNICEF, UNESCO, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. I trust that Education in Timor-Leste will be able to continue relying on your support.

I also want to compliment the Timorese People, particularly all the teachers, education professionals, students, teachers and carers, for the 15th anniversary of the Restoration of our Independence.

We have been walking together these last 15 years on a path filled with success, but also challenges. I hope that we will continue moving together with perseverance on this path

towards a prosperous Timor-Leste, where citizens are educated, reliable, productive and useful to their families, their communities and the Motherland.

I would like to conclude this Congress by reiterating the motto of the Sixth Constitutional Government and adding a few words that were said here: “One for all and all for one... Failure is not an option!”

Thus I declare this 3rd National Congress on Education of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to be over.

Thank you very much.

17 May 2017

Dr Rui Maria de Araújo