



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

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY
THE PRIME MINISTER
OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE,
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO,
AT THE LAUNCHING CEREMONY OF THE
NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR CHILDREN**

President Nicolau Lobato Palace, Bairro Pité, Dili
1 June 2017

Your Excellencies

The President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and spouse

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

Members of Parliament, fellow Government Members

The Commissioner for Children's Rights

The Representatives of Diplomatic Corps and UNICEF

The Representatives from Civil Society, Non-Governmental Organisations

Ladies and Gentlemen

Boys and Girls,

I would like to start by saying I am very happy to be celebrating Children's Day, particularly in front of such an audience, especially by the invitation addressed by S. E. the President of the Republic to participate in this so important event that welcomes in this place of the highest relevance. A round of applause for H. E. the President of the Republic and his spouse who welcome us, and especially the children, to celebrate their day.

Indeed, what could be better than celebrating International Children's Day with children? As such, I would like to ask for a round of applause for every child in the world, especially for our Timorese boys and girls!

Today is a special day – it is your day! This is the day when the world celebrates and pays homage to children, who are often a source of inspiration for us grown-ups. And in addition to being an inspiration, children also represent hope in the future – both in the future of our country and our people as in the future of Mankind.

As such, it is our duty as State and as citizens to acknowledge, respect and protect the rights of children, as well as to promote their dignity and their upbringing in a healthy environment, so that they can fulfil their full potential.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a universal document that enshrines the rights of the child. It was adopted by the United Nations in 1989 and ratified by Timor-Leste in 2003, one year after we regained our independence.

Ten years later, in 2013, Timor-Leste submitted to the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child our 2nd and 3rd reports on the implementation of this Convention. In its response, the Committee recommended us to draft a National Action Plan for Children.

Consequently we have been adopting and implementing a set of legal instruments seeking to improve and strengthen the protection of the Rights of the Child, which is the ultimate goal of the Convention.

Back in the 70th Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Sixth Constitutional Government stated that we were working – under the leadership of the National Committee on the Rights of the Child, in collaboration with non-governmental organisations, civil society and churches and with support by UNICEF – to draft our National Action Plan for Children.

At the start of our mandate we announced that we were working on this Plan; today we are here to launch it!

In addition to being a great achievement, this reflects the importance that our State allocates to guaranteeing and protecting the rights of the Child. This importance is conveyed in the policies set in our strategic documents, namely the Strategic Development Plan and the Programme of the Sixth Constitutional Government.

The 2016-2020 National Action Plan for Children reflects the Government of Timor-Leste's ambition to create an atmosphere that gives greater respect and protection to, as well as upholds the rights of, every boy and girl in our country, particularly those living in less favourable circumstances and in more remote and rural areas.

The approval of the Plan's execution by the Council of Ministers at the start of the year reflects our commitment to ensuring that every child grows in a healthy environment, with access to school and quality education, good health and proper food, and that their rights are upheld. This in turn contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 4, 5, 8, 11 and 16.

Indeed, this is the result of an overall effort by all relevant government bodies that, throughout the five years in which this Plan will be implemented, vow to give special attention to issues connected with the protection of children, the health and nutrition of our children and youngsters, pre-school and basic education and participation by our children and youngsters.

To do so, and in order to ensure this Plan is successfully implemented, the budgeting for the relevant sectors must include a perspective on the rights of the child. We must also prioritise having children represented in the planning of each government body and in the allocation of funds to the Plan. We must make sure we have sufficient and adequate human resources to handle children issues at the various ministries and to support a focal point for coordinating and monitoring the execution of the 2016-2020 National Action Plan for Children.

H. E. The President of the Democratic Republic
Ladies and Gentlemen
Boys and Girls

The day when we celebrate International Children's Day is also the most appropriate day for launching our National Action Plan for Children, in line with this year's national motto: "Invest in the future of children; strengthen political commitment in implementing the National Action Plan for Children" ("Investe ba labarik nia futur; reforsa kompromisu politiku ba implementasaun Planu Asaun Nasional ba Labarik").

Investment in children must come from all those who have responsibilities in making sure that children live in a good and healthy family and community environment; that they enjoy their rights to identity, health, nutrition and education, repudiating each and every act of violence, abuse and discrimination, so that children may fully enjoy their rights to participation and free speech in society.

When I say "all", I am not making any exceptions. Whether we are men or women, whether or not we are parents, regardless of how old we are or what office we hold, we are all responsible for implementing this Plan – we must all invest in children, we must all invest in the future!

Before I finish, I would like to challenge our children and all those in attendance to join me in saying: *Ida ba hotu-hotu, hotu-hotu ba ida!*

I now finish my address in the same manner I started it: with a round of applause for all children and with hearty congratulations to everyone!

Dr Rui Maria de Araújo
1 June 2017