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OPENING REMARKS BY  
H.E. THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE  
PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS  
AND MINISTER INTERIM OF THE MINISTRY  
OF PETROLEUM AND MINERALS,

**AGIO PEREIRA**

**4th IPG International Geosciences Conference**  
on Timor-Leste Geological Resources Data and Information  
for Economic Diversification and Development

Dili, 23-26 October, 2018

Dili Convention Center, Dili, Timor-Leste, Tuesday, 23 October, 2018



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Avenida Presidente Nicolau Lobato,  
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His Excellency,

Francisco Guterres Lú Olo, President of the RDTL,

His Excellency, Mariano Assanami Sabino,

His Excellency, Joaquim dos Reis Martins,

His Excellency, Alfredo Pires,

His Excellency, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão,

His Excellency, Arão Noé de Jesus da Costa, President of the National Parliament,

Honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I am delighted to address you on this occasion of the opening of the 4th IPG International Geosciences Conference and to warmly welcome the international experts who have made the effort to come to Dili and everyone here who has taken an interest in the geology of Timor-Leste, and the geophysics research and surveys being conducted here.

I would also like to acknowledge the leadership and staff of the Autoridade Nacional do Petróleo e Minerais (ANPM), of Timor Gap, and of the Instituto do Petróleo e Geologia who daily strive to build up Timor-Leste's capabilities and strengthen our country's position as we work towards achieving the goals set out in our Strategic Development Plan.

The function performed by the IPG is important.

To appreciate the value of the work being produced under the "umbrella" of the IPG, it is useful to consider the role of geophysical data and information in the context of Timor-Leste's history to look at where we are at today and to understand how reliable data on our country's



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geological features and assets is indispensable to our endeavours to realise our plans for our nation's future.

In this context, I shall say a few words about geology in relation to Timor-Leste's past, present and future.

Many of you may know that in March this year, Timor-Leste and Australia signed a bilateral treaty delimiting permanent maritime boundaries in the Timor Sea. This treaty was concluded following a compulsory conciliation process initiated by Timor-Leste – the first of its kind under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, "UNCLOS".

The signing of this treaty put to bed a complex and long-running dispute between Timor-Leste and our southern neighbour. The formal conciliation process was successfully completed in a remarkably short 18 months.

However, the seeds of the dispute go back much further to the colonial era, when our half-island was still Portuguese Timor.

It is now well documented, and the facts are today in the public domain, that oil companies had been exploring the Timor Sea for oil and gas since the 1960' and seismic and other data had been collected from that time, even though the information was tightly held – in the hands of others, but not of Timorese.

The existence of the data, and the knowledge of the presence of rich hydrocarbon reserves off the shores of Portuguese Timor, directly as well as indirectly impacted the course of this country's history through invasion and occupation our long fight for freedom and independence and now, our drive to secure Timor-Leste's full sovereignty through the delimitation of all our land and maritime boundaries and the securing of our country's economic future through sustainable development.

As the saying goes, "Knowledge is Power".



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We have seen from history how information on our country's geological resources can be obscured, and data skewed to serve vested interests.

It is therefore crucial, today, for Timor-Leste to gather and possess accurate, dependable scientific data and analysis on the geological resources of the country, so that we can approach the economic development of our nation in an informed, rational and enlightened manner.

Following the signing of the Maritime Boundary Treaty on March 6th this year, the governments of Timor-Leste and Australia have engaged in intensive discussions with all affected oil and gas contractors to ensure that their contractual rights are preserved after treaty ratification.

The certainty brought by the Treaty has created a positive milieu for companies and attracted new interest to participate in the exploration and exploitation of oil and gas in the Timor Sea.

On the Greater Sunrise project, the recent move by the Timor-Leste government to acquire Conoco Phillips' stake in the Sunrise joint venture now places Timor-Leste in a more advantageous position for direct involvement as a business partner with the other joint venture partners... in our ongoing efforts to secure a natural gas liquefaction plant on our shore.

Other progress:

Recently, an inaugural oil and gas exploration programme has been launched for Block A and C on Timor-Leste's south coast. This marks an important milestone for the onshore exploration of petroleum resources in the country. Meanwhile, the ongoing development drilling of Bayu Undan has also shown encouraging results.

The reality is, oil and gas will continue to be a major economic pillar for Timor-Leste in the near future. But we do not forget nor neglect the priority of economic diversification.



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In addition to petroleum, our ongoing airborne geophysical survey, on top of previous studies conducted by various parties on the geology of Timor-Leste, have attracted growing foreign investor interest in mineral exploration in this country.

Over the past 2 years, the ANPM has prepared Timor-Leste's first-ever Mining Code. The current government is committed to finalising the Code this year.

It is in the interest of all parties to see the Mining Code approved by parliament and adopted into law, so that Timor-Leste can offer clear and compelling terms and conditions to investors, while meeting the aspirations of the country for maximum revenues and benefits arising from each phase of mining activities.

We are fortunate to be advancing Timor-Leste's economic development at a time when there is much knowledge in the world about how to engage in the extractive industry in a responsible way that minimizes negative environmental impact that maximizes long-term benefits to our citizens and country and that promotes equity for our communities and for society at large.

This is knowledge that has been gained from the past mistakes and the experience of others that have gone before us, so that we can choose to not commit the same errors.

Looking ahead, the ANPM is preparing to launch, in 2019, a fresh bid-round for oil and gas exploration onshore, as well as for a wider offshore area, after the ratification of the Maritime Boundary Treaty. For this purpose, the ANPM's offshore department recently acquired 2D broadband seismic equipment to map the relevant areas.

In the meantime, our ongoing onshore airborne geophysics survey will gather the geological information that is required by companies to compete for the blocks.



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Going forward, the Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals will continue to support scientific studies of Timor-Leste's geological features and assets and to work towards the strategic exploitation of our mineral and other natural resources.

We recognise that reliable geophysical data and analysis will help Timor-Leste not only to grow our economy, but also underpin our urban planning as the country's population grows, and our cities and towns expand. They will serve as the basis for the identification of suitable sites for forestry and agriculture, geo-tourism, sports and other productive sectors.

Good data will help us deal with our water resources, sanitation and public health as well as enable us to form plans to avert potential calamities that may be triggered by extreme weather events and natural phenomena such as earthquakes and tsunamis.

In short, comprehensive and accurate geophysical data and information is essential for the nation's economic development.

Now, to summarize simply everything that I've just said: Everyone knows that Timor-Leste arose out of the sea on the back of a giant crocodile: Avô Crocodilo. But now we need to find out what the back of this Great Ancestor is really made of! And your work will produce the information and analysis that will form the backbone for the strategic execution of Timor-Leste's economic development plans.

Let me exhort you – and all of us – therefore, to apply ourselves with diligence and excellence to the work at hand.

You may be working in a specific area of LIDAR mapping... or hydro-geology... or sedimentology or geo-hazard forecasting but your contribution is to the building and lifting-up of the people and nation of Timor-Leste.

That is the true purpose and value of your work. And of this, you can be proud.

Thank you.



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