



PRESIDÊNCIA DO
**CONSELHO
DE MINISTROS**



OFFICE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE AND
PRESIDENCY OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

**SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE
OFFICIAL DINNER OF**

H.E. TARO KONO, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF JAPAN

AND MRS. KAORI KONO

Díli, 12 October, 2018

**MINISTER OF STATE AND PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
AND ACTING MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION**

AGIO PEREIRA





PRESIDÊNCIA DO CONSELHO DE MINISTROS



I am delighted to welcome our friend, His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Taro Kono, and Madame Kaori Kono, to Timor-Leste.

It is a great pleasure, and an honour to host you and your delegation this evening.

Excellency, your visit has stirred some memories of my personal connection with Japan.

As a young man living in exile, I travelled to various countries to raise awareness about the situation in Timor-Leste under Occupation at the time, and the plight of our people.

In Japan, I was welcomed with great kindness and courtesy.

Under the difficult circumstances of those years, I was very much touched by the warmth that I received.

This, I will always remember.

Also, as an exile in Portugal in the 1970's and living in a rather rough neighbourhood I decided that I needed to learn to protect myself.

So, I took up Aiki-do.

Our *sensei* used to tell us to sit on the ground in a circle close our eyes and think about nothingness: empty our minds.

While we are doing that, he would walk around behind us with a big stick and whack us on our heads! and instruct us to continue to maintain serenity.

Looking back, I think that training helped prime me for the challenges of politics!





PRESIDÊNCIA DO CONSELHO DE MINISTROS



I am glad for your visit, Excellency, because Timor-Leste and Japan are friends. The relationship between our peoples existed from before Timor-Leste's independence.

And since our country's independence, Timor-Leste and Japan have had various cultural, sports and youth exchanges, as well as cooperation in multilateral fora.

These interactions have expanded our people-to-people relationships, and enriched our mutual understanding.

Timor-Leste and Japan may appear quite different on the surface:

- one is small, the other larger;
- one is in the northern hemisphere, the other in the south;
- one is among the most advanced and developed nations in the world, the other still in relatively early stages of development

but we have much in common:

- Timor-Leste and Japan are both nations that greatly value our history and heritage;
- We are both nations that have risen from the ashes of war; and
- We are both maritime nations with a deep connection to the sea.

When we look at how far Japan has come from the devastation of the Second World War and how you have rebuilt and remade your country into now the third largest economy in the world it is a marvellous and inspiring picture.





PRESIDÊNCIA DO CONSELHO DE MINISTROS



The work ethic of the Japanese people, your perfectionism and your talent for innovation – these are all legendary qualities for which Japan is known throughout the world.

We are looking and we are learning from you.

As for Timor-Leste, we know that development cannot take place in the absence of peace and stability.

This is why following independence, Timor-Leste established fresh relations with our former Occupier – Indonesia – and pursued a policy of reconciliation.

Today, Timor-Leste enjoys excellent relations with our neighbour.

Indonesia is our largest trading partner, and it was also the first country to endorse Timor-Leste's application for membership in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – "ASEAN".

We therefore welcome, Excellency, your country's Trilateral Development Cooperation Scheme for Timor-Leste, Indonesia and Japan – the "T-I-J" – and believe this will further enhance and strengthen our trilateral relationship with mutual benefits for all our 3 countries, and for the region.

Timor-Leste and Japan are maritime nations. The seas affect our weather, our health, the food we eat, our access to international markets, our economy and our security.

The safety of our waters the clarity of our boundaries and the freedom of navigation are therefore of prime importance.

As you are aware, Excellency in March this year, Timor-Leste and Australia signed a bilateral maritime boundary treaty delimiting our permanent boundaries in the Timor Sea.

This treaty was concluded following an 18-month compulsory conciliation process – the first of its kind under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea – "UNCLOS".





PRESIDÊNCIA DO CONSELHO DE MINISTROS



The signing of this treaty put to bed a long-running dispute between Timor-Leste and our southern neighbour.

As a small country, Timor-Leste subscribes to and indeed, relies upon the supremacy of the law, and on the principle of the equality of states under international law, regardless of the shape or size of the country.

The peaceful settlement of inter-state disputes, based on international law, is a principle to which both Timor-Leste and Japan subscribe.

Timor-Leste looks forward to cooperating with Japan and other like-minded nations to advance the health and safety of our oceans and seas.

Allow me to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Japan for your friendship, and the support you have kindly extended to Timor-Leste via the good work of “JICA”, the Japan International Cooperation Agency in development assistance, capacity building, academic scholarships for Timorese, training for our defense personnel and journalists, in health and sanitation, agriculture and rural development, as well as projects to maintain and improve key infrastructure in Timor-Leste.

We were privileged this afternoon to have your Excellency inaugurate the Ponte Hinode-bashi in Comoro in Dili built with the support of Japan’s Grant Aid.

This bridge is a beautiful testament to the friendship between our two countries.

On the people-to-people level, connections fostered over the years under JENESYS and KIZUNA have laid a firm foundation of mutual respect, understanding and affection between our two peoples.

Today, Timor-Leste is working towards the building-up and diversification of our national economy.





PRESIDÊNCIA DO CONSELHO DE MINISTROS



Our land is imbued with valuable minerals, our seas rich in fish and biodiversity, our beaches gleaming and empty, and our country bursting with tourism potential – a new and exciting destination right in the heart of Southeast Asia.

We are undertaking detailed scientific surveys of our nation's natural resources in order to draw up a plan to exploit our assets in a responsible and sustainable manner, for the long-term benefit of our citizens.

We invite Japan's companies and investors to come to Timor-Leste to set up businesses and factories to build hotels and bakeries to establish farms and aquaculture and harvest from the fresh, unpolluted waters of Timor's seas.

Timor-Leste has much appreciated Japan's aid. Looking ahead, we aspire to trade. Free trade.

Excellency and Mrs. Kono thank you for coming. I hope you will not wait another 17 years before coming to visit us again.

Please come again soon, with your family, to explore Timor-Leste and enjoy the excellent scuba diving.

It will be our great pleasure to welcome you back.

May I raise a toast to your health, and to an ever-deeper and stronger friendship between Timor-Leste and Japan.

Viva Timor-Leste and Viva Japan!

“Kam-pai” ! (cheers)

