



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

**ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL DINNER IN HONOUR OF
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE PORTUGUESE
REPUBLIC AND HIS DELEGATION**

Noble Palace of Lahane, Dili
25 July 2023



Palácio do Governo
Avenida Marginal
Dili, Timor-Leste

Your Excellency
The President of the Republic

Your Excellency
The Speaker of Parliament

Your Excellency
The Prime Minister of Portugal and my dear friend, Mr António Costa

Your Excellency, the President of the Court of Appeal

Distinguished Members of Parliament

Your Excellency, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal and my dear friend, Mr João Gomes Cravinho

Your Excellency, the Minister for Labour, Solidarity and Social Security of Portugal, Ms Ana Mendes Godinho

Dearest members of the Portuguese Delegation

Members of the Timorese Government

Distinguished members of the Diplomatic Corps

Excellencies
Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Your Excellency, Mr Prime Minister, and your distinguished delegation to Timor-Leste.

The IX Constitutional Government entered into office only 25 days ago, and this is the first official visit of a Head of Government to our country since then.

I could say that I feel honoured, and even privileged, but I choose the word “emotional” to describe today's meeting with Your Excellency, my dear friend, in the capital of my country.

For me, for the government of Timor-Leste and also for the Timorese people, this visit represents the confirmation of something that we feel with emotion: the friendship, affection and mutual respect, particularly to those who share profound feelings of unity.

The Portuguese government has delivered a clear message today as to its determination to strengthen friendship and cooperation between our two countries, which are fundamental for this new political cycle we are experiencing, one that aims for transformation and progress for the Timorese people.

There are few who know our history as well as the Portuguese. It is a history of struggle and sacrifice, of conquest and freedom, of rebuilding and consolidating the State, with ups and downs, crises, and even setbacks. But always a history of ambition, the ambition of a people dreaming of a dignified life and opportunities for development.

The electoral process of last May once again demonstrated that the Timorese people have a democratic culture and exercise their legitimate right to decide their future. Indeed, the Timorese want to consolidate a democratic rule of law that is credible, independent, and responsible, a State that promotes tolerance, human rights, social justice, and international solidarity, a State that leads to development and progress.

Still, we all recognise with humility that we are still a young and fragile country, and we must therefore strive harder, work harder, to find solutions and create opportunities that will lift us out of poverty.

This was precisely the commitment of the government upon taking office and presenting its program to the National Parliament last week. Unprecedentedly, this program was approved unanimously, demonstrating the collective will of all major political forces in the country to work for the well-being of the people.

And, as I mentioned before, there are few who understand the challenges and needs of the Timorese people as well as Your Excellency, Prime Minister, and the members of your Government.

Mr Prime Minister,

The relationship between our two countries is truly special. In addition to sharing a language and a common identity, we also share common sufferings and hopes. And I do not mean only when the Portuguese national squad takes to the pitch...

The Portuguese in Timor are our allies and mentors, and the Timorese in Portugal are welcomed into your families, supported, cared for, and encouraged to progress and prosper.

In a world filled with turmoil, wars, power struggles, greed, and challenges that threaten the very survival of humanity, we should rejoice in this special relationship, our shared past, the dynamism and partnership of our present, and the future we can still build together.

I would say that Portugal is like our older brother! Not only for the crucial role played in our struggle for sovereignty, which I can never forget and will never stop thanking, but also for the continuous bilateral cooperation and Portuguese investment in practically all crucial sectors for our development.

While I cannot list here the extensive range of all areas of cooperation where Portugal is an unparalleled partner (otherwise we would never get to our dinner!), I must emphasise crucial areas that we would like to see strengthened, such as education and training, justice, public

finance, healthcare, defence, social security, tourism, and the development of basic infrastructure.

I would like to seize the moment to share the challenge I made to Your Excellency, Prime Minister, during our bilateral meeting, for greater cooperation in projects that are part of the new momentum of this Government. We believe these projects can be drivers for our country's economic development and an opportunity to generate employment for our youth, who, as you know, are growing in numbers and are vulnerable.

I refer, firstly, to our goal of decentralisation, knowing that Portugal's experience in Public Administration and Municipalities is a source of knowledge and excellence that we want to learn from to advance with this priority.

Secondly, "Portugal is Sea," "Timor is Tasi"! While our countries may be small, they grow exponentially when we look to the sea. It was the sea that united us, and it was with Portuguese "sailors" that we learned the language of Camões.

From the sea, there is a whole range of sectors that present themselves as potential drivers of sustainable development. From traditional to more recent sectors, we want to build a sustainable Blue Economy. And I know that Portugal is also investing in the Blue Economy, not only to generate wealth for its people but also to strengthen the climate and the ocean.

Therefore, we would like our strategy in defining a National Policy for the Blue Economy to benefit from the experience, knowledge, and innovation of the Portuguese. Let us sail together in establishing a sustainable Blue Economy in Timor-Leste.

Your Excellencies
Mr Prime Minister,

Portugal is also an unparalleled partner in the values we uphold in the multilateral sphere, promoting peace, justice, and combating poverty and inequalities.

Our cooperation and common vision for the global future, based on the commitments of the United Nations Charter, mobilise us in the fight against climate change, defending international law, promoting territorial integrity and security among States, strengthening democracies, and advancing social and economic development for all, so as to leave no one behind.

Within the framework of the CPLP, the strategic value of friendly nations that share principles, values, and affections should converge towards new ambitions that elevate the living conditions of our citizens, particularly for our young Portuguese speakers. The CPLP can and should benefit more from economic cooperation in strategic sectors for the development of our societies. And just as Portugal connects our community to Europe, so too can Timor-Leste be a gateway to Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

Mr Prime Minister

Dear Friend António Costa,

To conclude, I believe that, as a result of this visit, we have established a new milestone in the history of our diplomatic relations. The willingness of both our countries to reaffirm the commitment to cooperation for the development of our peoples and communities in Portugal and Timor-Leste has never been so evident.

During your last visit to this country in 2006, at a bitter moment in our still young independence, in your capacity as Minister of Internal Administration, you said that "a friend in need is a friend indeed" and that "Portugal is a friendly country". It has not just been through words, but through concrete actions – from the Portuguese government, public and private institutions, and Portuguese individuals who visit or reside in Timor-Leste – that the Timorese people witness this friendship daily.

We are aware of the challenges that Portugal also faces, after the pandemic and now the war in Europe. This war brings uncertainties when we least need them and poses new challenges to the world, including inflationary pressures and increased living costs, also making the daily life of the Portuguese more difficult.

As you said, Mr Prime Minister, a friend in need is a friend indeed. Besides having a fraternal relationship with Portugal, Timor-Leste also wants to strengthen its solidarity and commitment to ensure that our bilateral cooperation takes on a form that benefits both our countries, with partnerships, projects and investments that yield tangible benefits not only to the Timorese, but to the Portuguese as well.

I sincerely hope, Mr Prime Minister, that you and your delegation feel at home during this visit and that you can also enjoy our culture and affection.

In Timor, true friends are like our brothers and sisters. Therefore, this is the visit of a close family member, whom we want to have always close by.

Finally, I wish every success for the World Youth Day which will be attended by Pope Francis, also a great friend of Timor-Leste.

Thank you very much.