



**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE**  
**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

**Opening Remarks by H.E. Mr. Xanana Gusmão**  
**Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste**  
**to the**  
**First International Conference on Timor Coffee**

**Dili, 3 April 2009**

Minister for Tourism, Commerce and Industry

Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries

Excellencies

Members of Government

Mr. Néstor Osorio, Executive Director, International Coffee Organisation

Members of the International Coffee Community

Distinguished Guests

It gives me great pleasure to welcome each and every one of you to the First International Conference on Timor Coffee. And I would like to commend the Minister for Tourism, Commerce and Industry, together with the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for hosting this conference about Timor-Leste's most important agricultural export.

I would also like to recognise the presence of Mr. Néstor Osorio, Executive Director of the International Coffee Organisation.

The International Coffee Organisation is well known as the primary body that brings together exporting and importing countries to address the challenges of the world's coffee sector, while at the same time, making practical contributions towards improving the living standards in developing countries. I thank Mr. Osorio for his support and participation today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For Timor-Leste, rural and agricultural development is national development.

And with coffee being by far our largest agricultural export, the coffee industry will be important to our nation's future.

The coffee industry already makes a huge contribution to our country and to our People. Through working together to improve and increase our coffee production, we can achieve our dream of rural development in Timor-Leste.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a result of the work of our People, the international coffee community and our development partners, the production of coffee is already well developed in Timor-Leste.

Coffee has an important place in the culture and tradition of our country and the five districts of Timor-Leste that produce coffee – Emera, Aileu, Ainaro, Manufahi and Liquica – are distinctive for their abundance of coffee trees.

Our coffee culture adds to the diversity and beauty of our land, with coffee trees growing through our rural and mountainous areas.

And the production of coffee makes a huge difference to many of our People. Coffee production supports around 50,000 Timorese families, and in the coffee picking season between May to October around 15,000 jobs are created.

Coffee is, of course, also a huge export earner for Timor-Leste and is by far our number one agricultural export. This boosts our economic growth and has flow on economic benefits for Timor-Leste.

We also benefit from the fact that half of all our coffee is exported as organic and fair trade, which brings higher prices to our farmers and ensures greater care for our natural environment.

While Timor-Leste produces an estimated 0.2% of the world's coffee production, there is scope to improve and increase our coffee production. This will bring more export dollars back to our rural areas, stimulating local economies and increasing the living standards of our farming communities.

To achieve this, and to develop our rural areas, we must work together.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my humble opinion, Timorese coffee is the best in the world!

But we must work together to make sure that we can compete on the international market; a market that has been growing since the revival of coffee drinking in the 1980s with its emphasis on specialty gourmet coffee.

I would like to offer some “food for thought” for your deliberations over the next two days. That is, that we can achieve sustainable development through working together to develop speciality coffee in Timor-Leste.

The specialty coffee of Timor-Leste deserves greater respect on the international market. And I ask that the international coffee community continue to assist Timor-Leste and help us to explore the unique characteristics of our coffee that is found throughout our coffee growing areas, with their varied soils and micro-climates. In doing this, we can identify unique flavour profiles and characteristics for our customers.

In this task we must also remain focused on the development of our farming communities. We must realise the dreams of coffee farmers and their families with improved housing, clean water, education and opportunities for better standards of living. After all, these are the same dreams we all have and our relationship with farming communities must reflect our common dreams for our shared benefit.

How can we work together for common benefit?

Working together can begin with coffee buyers sharing information and resources with their farmer partners.

Additionally, roasters and importers can share technical skills on harvesting and processing, on picking the best beans, and on cupping coffee. And they can share information on what qualities are desired by consumers and how changes in growing, harvesting and processing can impact on these qualities.

Timor-Leste is looking for international partners who believe as we do, that the quality of our coffee is linked to the quality of life of our growers.

We are fortunate to have the ongoing assistance of our development partners, such as the United States, Portugal, Spain and Japan, who have been making a significant contribution to the development of our coffee industry.

And we hope that the great coffees of Timor-Leste will continue to find their way to the markets and the consumers of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, agricultural and rural development will be vital to the development of our nation – and as our most important agricultural export, coffee will be fundamental to this future.

Our coffee industry already makes a large and important contribution to our nation. And it provides great opportunities for our People. Through working together to improve and increase our production of coffee, we can help fulfil our common dreams for the rural development of Timor-Leste.

I encourage you to make the most of the opportunity that this conference provides, urge you to work together to build our coffee industry, and hope you enjoy many delicious cups of Timorese coffee!

Thank you very much.