



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

ADDRESS

BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE

KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO

DEMOCRACY FORUM II

**“Promoting Synergy between Democracy and Development in
Asia: Prospects for Regional Cooperation”**

NUSA DUA, BALI

10-11 DECEMBER 2009

Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Indonesia
Your Excellencies the Heads of State and Heads of Government
Your Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great satisfaction that, after exactly one year, I am here again participating in the Bali Democracy Forum II, with confidence that this meeting will build on the success of last year's forum in strengthening democracy and cooperation between the many nations represented today. This is the goal that we set ourselves, and that we committed to, at the inaugural Forum.

Promoting regional and international cooperation in Asia, through engaging in a discourse of democracy and development, provides a strategic opportunity for our Nations and for the growth of our economies. It is through this framework of dialogue that we can better progress, and that we can better meet the challenges that we all face as a connected international community.

The Global Economic Crisis, that has marked the year 2009 and which provoked widespread fear of a worldwide depression, has also highlighted the strength of our region and the benefits of our democratic and development processes.

This Crisis brought us troubled times with the People of the developing world suffering greatly. But, the Crisis also brought with it opportunities. It has raised a new consciousness about Asia's strength and of our region's emerging place in the World. For it is the economies of Asia that are best weathering the economic storm and that are helping to pull the world out of deep recession.

And so, it should be acknowledged that the measures and reforms implemented by countries in our region – including steps to strengthen economic openness and democratic governance – have had a great impact on our economic resilience. It is in this way, as our region enjoys the world's fastest rates of economic growth, that we can make contribution at a global level.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We can not emphasise enough the importance of this Forum. Bringing nations together with a commitment to strengthen democracy and development is not an indulgence – it is a necessity. This is because as nations, in our connected world, we can not walk alone in tackling our great challenges.

This point can be no better illustrated by the meeting this week, in another city, on the other side of the globe, where representatives of the world are meeting to agree on a path to tackle climate change. By starting two years ago in Bali, the Copenhagen Conference reminds us all of the importance of regional and international cooperation.

It is, therefore, imperative that the nations of our region meet to engage in dialogue on a central issue that we face – the promotion of democracy and development. It is through democracy and development that we can deliver social and economic improvement for our People and ensure that they have a voice in their future.

It is through promoting regional cooperation, nurturing a common political will to embrace what we have in common and, above all, learning from our successes and best practices in promoting peace, justice, prosperity and freedom, that we can benefit the People of our region.

And so, I must congratulate His Excellency the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Dr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, for his vision, his insight and his spirit of regional solidarity. His leadership in organising this Forum is but another example of his commitment to the consolidation of a more democratic and more developed region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our countries are, of course, marked by different histories, cultures, governance frameworks and challenges. There is, however, one common aspiration that brings us together on this day: our unfaltering pursuit of development.

We want to provide better living conditions for our People, ensure that everyone lives in a climate of peace and stability, and to achieve balanced and sustainable economic growth.

These are challenges that, if shared in this enabling environment of dialogue and exchange of experiences, can be pursued with greater success. Promoting synergies with our Asian partners is, therefore, a common agenda to which Timor-Leste is fully committed.

Timor-Leste is the youngest country represented here, and also one of the poorest. However, ten years following our independence, and after a number of missteps, we firmly believe that we can now say: **Goodbye conflict, welcome Development!**

The confidence that our People have placed in democracy is the noblest expression of their yearning for poverty, hunger, disease and ignorance to be eradicated from Timor-Leste. In other words, to trust in democracy means to trust in development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Democracy has truly become a reality in Timor-Leste. I am not speaking only of our periodic and regular elections or of the operation of our democratic institutions - these elements alone do not equal true democracy.

It is the motivation and drive of our People, of our emergent private sector and of our young and strong civil society, who as a whole contribute to peace and to our national development and that illustrate to us all that in our democracy it is indeed possible to do better.

We must recognise, however, that achievement of a successful democracy is not an easy task in a country that is poor. For a family that is hungry, that lives in precarious conditions and that lacks access to quality health care, democracy can be a concept that is abstract and academic. And so, it is through economic growth and poverty reduction that we can achieve democratic consolidation.

We must, therefore, acknowledge and respect the circumstances of each nation in their pursuit of democratic ideals. There are no shortcuts in the road towards democracy and development. It can be a long and difficult road to reach the state where democratic values are understood and embraced by all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While every country is unique, Timor-Leste, along with several other countries, has a number of geographic, cultural, historic, ethnic and institutional factors that places it in the category of “fragile States”.

And we know that the common characteristics of fragile States are recent or latent situations of conflict and widespread poverty.

In Timor-Leste we are striving, with a true spirit of cooperation between our State institutions, to solve the difficult problems that our young Nation faces: social injustice and insecurity, maladministration and corruption, among others.

We are taking up this challenge with dignity and respect through adopting a common goal.

And, with humility, we are placing our struggle on the international agenda with the hope that our progress, and our lessons, can assist other countries that are in delicate or difficult circumstances.

We are committed to assuming our responsibility as a Member State of the International Community and, through using our collective experience, supporting the development and democratic consolidation of other Peoples in need.

This is why at the Third High Level Forum in Accra, Ghana, Timor-Leste volunteered to be one of a group of 7 fragile States to monitor Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations.

And the group consists of Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Côte d'Ivoire and Timor-Leste.

Together, we will all be working to support each other, and to learn from each, as we all seek to move from a state of fragility to one of sustainable progress and development. In this way Timor-Leste acknowledges our responsibility, as a country that is now experiencing stability and economic growth, to provide both: hope and an example to this important group of nations.

And as part of this process, fragile States from around the world will be gathering in Dili in April 2010 to participate in a meeting of the group of 7 fragile States – our G7!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I can say with confidence that the Timorese People believe we are moving in the right direction. As evidence of this, we need only to look at the manner in which our community

elections took place last October. Our People actively participated with pride and maturity, providing a lesson in citizenship and democracy.

In the last two years, we have progressed greatly as a nation. We have enjoyed peace and social stability as never before, we have implemented essential reforms, and we have achieved historic levels of economic growth (which reached over 12% last year) and, we believe, more than 8% in 2009.

Timor-Leste still faces many challenges, but we can rely on the willingness of our political leaders, bold and integrated government policy, and our People who are committed to a better future for their children. And we are of course also fortunate to have natural resources that, if used in a responsible and fair way, can enable our economy to become a successful model of development.

Timor-Leste is in the process of fulfil the commitments of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) and for this goal we are in the process of releasing the independent audit report, in the end of this year, for public consultation. Next year, March 2010, all the processes and criteria requested by EITI, regarding the Petroleum wealth is going to be validate by an independent board – a great step in the openness and good governance of our petroleum resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have been looking closely at the reforms undertaken by other nations in our region, and especially our closest neighbour Indonesia, to inform our establishment of a framework of good governance for our public sector. Through these reforms - and by instilling a culture of professionalism and service delivery in our civil service - we are seeking to ensure that public funds are spent in an effective way for the benefit of our People.

We have recently established a Civil Service Commission to ensure an apolitical civil service, with promotions made on the basis of merit and competence, to achieve better government service delivery for our society.

And we are in the process of establishing an Anti-Corruption Commission, which will be an independent body reporting to the National Parliament and with strong powers to fight corruption.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Timor-Leste is working to meet the necessary conditions to become an effective member of ASEAN.

We wish to increase our participation in regional cooperation frameworks, to contribute towards the development of the region as part of its role in addressing global challenges.

This participation will represent another historic landmark for our country, demonstrating to the world that Timor-Leste is ready to contribute to the promotion of tolerance and dialogue, both at national and regional levels.

And as we discuss regional cooperation and democracy, one country is too close for us to remain indifferent or passive to the struggle of its People. I must urge us all to work with focused effort and persistence to respond to the aspirations of the people of Burma.

As part of the Asian community, I stress that if the interest of Burmanese are neglected, then our entire region is affected. And so, we must work to ensure that the fruits of the growth and progress of our region are enjoyed by all the People of our neighbour countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am confident that this meeting will be remembered as one in which we worked with solidarity to empower our region to develop solutions to overcome our common challenges – it will be an important step to make democracy and development a reality in the countries of Asia.

Thank you very much!

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão

10 December 2009