



**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE**

**ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER  
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO  
TO THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM 2011**

**AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND**

**7 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you, celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Pacific Islands Forum.

While Timor-Leste always ensures we have high level representation at the Pacific Islands Forum, this is my first opportunity to address this Forum and it is a great honour.

I would like to thank the host nation, New Zealand, and its Prime Minister, John Key.

When Prime Minister Key invited me to attend this Forum I was very pleased to accept as this is also an opportunity to watch the Rugby World Cup!

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our solidarity with the people of New Zealand, and in particular Christchurch, after the terrible earthquakes they suffered a year ago and more recently.

Our hearts and our thoughts have been with the people who have endured such great pain and grief.

While the tragic events remind us all of our common humanity, we also know well the strength, and the fortitude, of New Zealanders, and trust that this will ensure a future of promise and returned confidence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you are all aware, Timor-Leste has observer status at the Pacific Islands Forum.

Our country wishes to step up our engagement with the Pacific Islands Forum and strengthen our relationships with its member nations. Some of them contributed to put an end to the violence and destruction that followed the Referendum in 1999.

Our country, shares much in common with our pacific island friends.

2012 will be a special year for us. In March, we will have Presidential elections followed by Parliamentary elections in June.

We will celebrate our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 20<sup>th</sup> May; on 30<sup>th</sup> August, we will celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last great rebellion against Portuguese colonial rule and on 28<sup>th</sup> November, we will mark the 500<sup>th</sup> year of the arrival of the first Portuguese sailors and traders. We would be honoured if leaders of the pacific island nations would join us in Dili for these celebrations.

As you can see, we are a new nation.

As a new nation, there is much we can learn from the experiences of Pacific island countries.

We share not only common values but also common challenges and opportunities.

We can learn from your experiences in tackling some of our shared issues, from your approaches to development and from your success stories.

In what is proving to be a rapidly changing world, Timor-Leste wants to work together in partnership so that we can all achieve better results for our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are witnessing an historic **shift in the structure of the global economy**.

While this is creating volatility and uncertainty, it also promises great hope.

We may be small island States, but we are not immune from these major political and economic structural changes.

These global changes mean we are now in the **Asia-Pacific century**.

We are seeing global economic and strategic weight shift to our region.

And the Asia-Pacific has been, and will continue to be, the powerhouse of global economic growth.

According to experts, we will see the financial centres of the world slowly move from New York to Shanghai, from London to Mumbai.

The world's largest economies will be in our region – including China, Japan, India and Indonesia – and they will continue to grow and provide our nations with great promise.

Together we can make sure we seize these opportunities.

We can learn from each other on how to benefit from the huge numbers of new Asian tourists.

We can learn from each other on how to build our industries, our fisheries, our agriculture and our markets to feed the demand from the great emerging economies.

We cannot stand apart from these global changes – even if we wanted to.

Therefore, I agree with you: **we must convert our potential into prosperity**.

Thus, as a small half island nation, Timor-Leste would rather not navigate this new world alone.

Instead, we want to set off to engage with this new world not with a single boat, but as part of a fleet of nations.

This will allow us all to realise the promise of the Asia-Pacific century with greater strength and with confidence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The rapid changes we are witnessing around the world will also bring with it great challenges.

These challenges could range from rising food prices to transnational crime and illegal fishing, from climate change to international conflict at sea.

The truth is that we do not know all the challenges ahead, but we do know that we cannot tackle them alone.

Today, we are already witnessing bad governments fall in the Middle East and Northern Africa.

We have also seen spontaneous riots in the centre of London; and mass protests in the south of Europe as once great nations struggle to pay their debts.

**This reminds us all of our own fragility.**

And in Timor-Leste we know well what it means to be fragile, to experience conflict.

Timor-Leste is engaging in a process of State building and peace building and we know how important peace and security is to economic and social development.

And we are not the only country to experience fragility.

To share our experiences, and learn from other countries, 17 nations from around the globe, that represent 350 million people, have joined together to form the g7+ group of fragile and conflict affected nations.

The g7+ group allows us to speak with one voice and explore new possibilities for solidarity and action in fragile States.

This new international grouping affirms the view that a leader who only knows one country, knows no country.

And it presents an opportunity for our nations to re-acquire ownership of the development program and to ensure that it does not weaken our self-determination.

I am pleased to say we are joined in the g7+ group by **our good friends, the Solomon Islands**. Together we are working to influence the global dialogue on aid, development and State building.

I urge you all to follow the progress of the g7+ as we tackle issues which will be shared by many of you here today, as we are all preparing to participate in the 4<sup>th</sup> High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan in December.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Timor-Leste has performed well in recent years.

We have enjoyed an extended period of peace and stability with the help of the United Nations and the International Stabilisation Force (ISF) from New Zealand and Australia, which will leave Timor-Leste following our parliamentary elections next year. We are grateful to them and to all our development partners.

And Timor-Leste is experiencing some of the highest levels of economic growth in the world.

Despite this, many of our people continue to live in extreme poverty and struggle every day and we continue to try our best to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

There is much we have to do to build our nation, eradicate extreme poverty and provide a good quality of education, health and life for all our people.

Timor-Leste has a long term plan to achieve these goals, our Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030.

In strengthening our relationships with the south pacific island nations we can learn new ways to implement our plans.

We know we have much in common.

After this Forum I will **travel to Vanuatu to visit a country that has been a long time friend of our people**.

Vanuatu has supported us during difficult times and we feel great solidarity and friendship for this fellow island nation.

Timor-Leste looks forward to also strengthening our relationship with all the islands of the Pacific.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Pacific Island Forum provides a great opportunity for us to work together and shape our promising future based on our shared values and common interests.

Timor-Leste looks forward to contributing to our regional prosperity and working in partnership with you all in the years ahead.

It has been great pleasure to address the Pacific Islands Forum.

Thank you very much.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão

7 September 2011