



**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  
ON THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S  
DAY**

**“PARTICIPATION BY YOUNG WOMEN IN NATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE”**

**Dili Convention Centre**

**8 March 2012**

Your Excellencies the Members of Parliament and dear Government colleagues  
Your Excellency the SRSG, Ameerah Haq  
Your Excellencies the representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, International Agencies and NGOs

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to be here, on the International Women's Day, paying homage to all Timorese women.

When talking about the women we must make a very special reference to all the women of Timor-Leste who have given so much to our beloved Nation.

I consider Timorese women to be synonymous with courage and determination!

In addition to the important role women have been playing in our State building, Timorese women are the cornerstone of our society. It is women who look after our homes and our children, and it is women who increasingly look after the growth of our Nation and our economy.

It is amazing that women are able to take on so many and so varied roles with the same level of dedication, without neglect to any of them.

I recall that even during the armed struggle we would never have had any success if not for Timorese women, who from the very start poured all their effort and knowledge into the cause of the national liberation, providing all types of indispensable support to the Resistance.

Many women also fought and many gave their lives so that our Nation could become independent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, living in an atmosphere of freedom and national sovereignty, which we achieved with so much sacrifice, women continue to play a vital role in society, both in the public sphere and in the private sphere. The activities in the latter are the engine of sustainable development that will enable our People to improve their livelihoods.

Timorese women are represented at the highest level in the various State bodies. They have attained leadership positions in the Government and are responsible for several ministerial portfolios – some of which are vital for our governance.

Likewise, from the time of the Constituent Assembly prior to independence up to the present legislature, women have occupied a significant part of the benches and have gained considerable prominence.

We should also mention our female Ambassadors in Portugal, at the United Nations, in China and in Mozambique, who play a very relevant role at international level. It is a

woman as well who leads the G7+ group of fragile States. Furthermore, Timor-Leste has been represented by women at the CEDAW Committee and at the Executive Council of the World Health Organization.

The percentage of women in the police is one of the highest in the world, not only in terms of quantity but most importantly in terms of quality. Many women have already reached, through merit, leadership positions that many believed and insinuated should be destined only for men.

Women have also been acquiring considerable representation in the military, performing their duties alongside their male comrades.

In civil society, women have an active participation in NGOs and in the private sector. Timorese women do this with great determination and hope.

And although there is still much to be done to promote gender equality in our country, we cannot fail to see that we have been truly committed to emancipating Timorese women.

Women have a vital role to play in the future of Timor-Leste.

When we speak of promoting gender equality, we must not forget that our goal is to remove the obstacles that prevent the complete fulfilment of women.

It is not merely becoming aware that there is juridical equality (in other words, equal rights and duties), but rather carrying out all mechanisms and processes that enable effective parity between men and women in all areas of life – political, social and economic.

In public administration there are an increasing number of women in professional sectors, from judges to doctors, from engineers to technical officers.

Particularly under the Secretariat of State for the Promotion of Equality, important measures have been developed in order to increase the participation of women in several sectors of society, namely: training, research and development of gender equality policies and strategies, as well as the development of a gender-sensitive State budget.

I cannot conclude without thanking the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, Ms Idelta Rodrigues, for her commitment and dedication to supporting Timorese women and for holding this initiative.

Lastly, I congratulate all women in attendance today on this very special day that seeks to place women in the position that they deserve and that they occupy in society.

Thank you very much.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão  
8 March 2012