



**PRIME  
MINISTER**

**ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER  
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO  
AT THE INAUGURAL EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL  
CULTURE SUMMIT**

Edinburgh (Delivered remotely from Díli)  
14 August 2012



Palácio do Governo,  
Avenida Presidente Nicolau Lobato,  
Díli, Timor-Leste

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to speak to this inaugural Edinburgh International Culture Summit.

I am a great believer in the importance of culture and cultural exchange.

In Timor-Leste, our culture binds us together through shared stories, traditions and experiences.

Our engagement with the culture of other nations helps us to better understand and value our neighbours, and the rich diversity of humanity.

It was a result of a cultural exchange that I first met my good friend, Harold Mitchell, who has just addressed the Summit.

In 2001 Harold, and Jonathan Mills, ran the Melbourne International Arts Festival.

To help foster links between Australia and the emerging nation of Timor-Leste, they invited me to attend, and to read one of my poems.

That visit forged lifelong friendships and established links that are still going strong today.

I want to thank Harold for his friendship and generous support to our nation's development.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last month, our people exercised their right to vote in elections.

This is a right that for 24 years was a dream, a dream that cost the lives of around a quarter of our population.

Our new Government has many plans to implement over the next five years.

This includes building roads, schools and hospitals and fighting poverty.

Our biggest challenge is to create jobs and a secure and peaceful future for our young people.

That is where our culture will play an important role.

The children of my generation listened to our elders tell stories about our ancestors - about crocodiles, and about our animist faith.

The term for this faith is Lulik.

It is the name given to powerful spirits of the dead that exist in our landscapes, rocks, animals and mountain streams.

We must follow the rules of our ancestors – including harmonious relations between family, within the clan, and in our country.

These are important cultural norms we want to encourage in our young people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last year, my Government released a 20 year Strategic Development Plan.

This Plan provides for new cultural institutions, including a National Academy for the Creative Arts.

The Academy will promote our traditional arts: including music, dance, painting, weaving, sculpture and jewellery making.

This will help create jobs and ensure that our young people know who they are, where they came from, and what it means to be Timorese.

Our culture also helps us build bridges in our region.

Timor-Leste is a half island nation.

We share our island with Indonesia - the world's largest Muslim nation, and one of the great emerging economies of the world.

We also share many cultural links.

It is this cultural affinity, and understanding, that has helped us rise above the pain of the past, and develop strong bonds of friendship and solidarity with Indonesia.

In a small way, we hope that our friendship with Indonesia inspires other nations, with similar histories, to recognise their shared cultural bonds and live together in peace.

I hope that this Summit leads to new friendships between people, and between nations, and a better understanding of the role of culture and the connections between us.

Thank you very much.