



PRIME
MINISTER

**ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE NINTH CONFERENCE OF
THE FORUM OF PRESIDENTS OF THE SUPREME
COURTS OF JUSTICE OF THE PORTUGUESE
SPEAKING COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES**

**22 October 2012
Hotel Timor
Dili**



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

Your Excellencies the Presidents of the Supreme Courts of Justice of the CPLP Countries and of the Special Region of Macau,
Your Excellency the Prosecutor-General of the Republic,
Your Excellency the Defender General,
Your Excellency the Minister of Justice,
Your Excellencies the Ambassadors of Portugal and Brazil,
Your Excellencies the National Judges and Legal Counsellors from the delegations in attendance,
Illustrious Guests,

It is an honour to be here today for this opening ceremony of the Ninth Conference of the Forum of the Presidents of the Supreme Courts of Justice of the Portuguese Speaking Countries and Territories. This event is even more exciting since it is the first time it is held in Timor-Leste.

As such, my first words must go to all those who have worked so hard to make this initiative possible, particularly Dr Cláudio Ximenes, my dear friend and the President of the Court of Appeals, whom I congratulate for preparing and planning this Conference.

To the illustrious Presidents of the Supreme Courts of Justice of the CPLP countries and of the Special Region of Macau, as well as to the Legal Counsellors and further delegation members, I wish that your stay in Timor-Leste will be as pleasant as can be. I am aware that all your time will be consumed by the work that brings you to Timor-Leste, but still I hope you will be able to enjoy some of the yet limited entertainment we can provide, in addition to the gentleness and hospitality of our people.

The Timorese State is still very young – we celebrated our 10th anniversary only this past May. Statebuilding has been the main concern of all those who have been elected to lead the Country.

This has been no easy task, as our lengthy struggle left our society with scars that take time to heal. We also had to build the entire institutional and administrative establishment from scratch and without any type of governance experience. Additionally, we had to contend with the lack of a coherent and updated legal framework and with the lack of trained Timorese staff able to take on the difficult tasks of administration and justice.

As such, we continue to strive to improve public administration in every State agency, giving more attention to the capacity building of human resources at every level.

Right from the start, we were aware that correctly administering justice is essential for affirming the Nation as an independent and sovereign State. Justice and economic and social growth are very closely related, as they depend from one another to successfully achieve the goal of improving the living situations of the people.

Without impartial and prompt justice, it is not possible to have social peace, which is an indispensable condition for the economy to develop.

Economic and social growth in our country will be extremely dependent from national or foreign private investment, and there can only be large investments when there is full confidence in a sector of justice that is able to handle possible conflicts with objectivity, impartiality and promptness.

We have been focusing and will continue to focus on building a system of justice that is more adjusted to our characteristics as a State in construction, while complying fully with the international standards of the community of countries that respect individual freedoms. Indeed, we are proud to be able to include ourselves in this community.

Right from the start, we did not hesitate to avail ourselves of the generous assistance by friendly countries, namely the Portuguese speaking countries, who promptly made themselves available to help us in building a fair and effective legal establishment.

The CPLP countries, particularly our brothers and sisters from Portugal, Brazil and Cape Verde, have been our main partners in terms of human and material resources. This has enabled us to have an already significant number of judges, prosecutors and defenders.

This cooperation began by favouring the performance of executive tasks, with international magistrates ensuring the tasks inherent to the direct administration of justice. At the time, this was required to put the courts into operation, but now we want to put cooperation on a new path. The Timorese professionals must now fully assume all the work related to the careers that they have chosen.

It is now time for Timorese magistrates and defenders to do the work for which they have been trained by themselves, from the start of cases until their respective trials. We have been implementing this progressively for some time. Timorese magistrates and defenders will also be able to rely on their international counterparts in terms of providing advice.

We naturally want to continue to be able to rely on the support provided by Portuguese speaking countries and territories in order to achieve this goal. We want to have bilateral cooperation based on the will to share knowledge by different peoples that speak the same language.

As such, it is very important for us to have this event taking place on Timorese soil. We hope that by the end of the working sessions, which will begin soon, there will be decisions reflecting the desire for a significant strengthening of cooperation between the various courts of the countries in attendance, in order for us to move towards a system of justice that is more humane and that has high standards of quality and professionalism.

The participation of our judges in this conference will enable them to develop their skills and to become increasingly aware of the vital need to act at all times with full independence and in such a way as to serve the higher interests of the Nation.

I urge all Timorese magistrates to have an active participation in this Forum and to make use of the lessons that can and should be conveyed by those who have more experience and much to teach.

I trust that this conference will achieve the success that we all hope for. I would also like to once again welcome our distinguished guests to this Country that receives you as brothers and sisters.

We are truly pleased to host you in Timor-Leste.

Thank you very much.