



PRIME
MINISTER

**ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO
AT THE GRADUATION CERIMONY FOR THE
FINALIST STUDENTS OF UNTL**

Dili Convention Centre
26 November 2012



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

Illustrious Rector, Prof. Dr. Aurélio Guterres
Minister of Health
Minister of Education

Distinguished Members of Parliament
Members of the Government
Distinguished Faculty Members

Ambassador of Cuba

Distinguished Guests

Dear graduates and families,

Today's ceremony, that marks the graduation of 450 students of medicine, represents more than an academic formality. It is, above all, an historical mark in the development of Timor-Leste that should be celebrated with joy.

The graduation of a so many sons and daughters of this land, in the health sector that is so essential for our people, is reason for great jubilation and renewed hope for the future.

It is, therefore, with immense satisfaction, that I participate in this ceremony to express my profound admiration for these young people who, despite the difficulties that were certainly felt throughout these years, never gave up!

Your efforts in contributing to the building of our social State honour the sacrifices of our people to liberate the country and allow for a future of hope for our children.

Your dedication demonstrates the true fibre of our people, our fighting and persistent spirit. Hence, just like the veterans and martyrs of the past, you now belong to the list of new heroes of the present!

Ambassador of Cuba,

I cannot forget to mention to you how grateful we are for Cuba having generously accepted these hundreds of young people, enriching them with knowledge and technical training to allow them to perform their obligations to their people, in the area of medicine.

I ask you, Mr. Ambassador, that you convey to my dear and most respected friend Commandant Fidel Castro, to President Raul Castro, to the Cuban Government and people, not only my personal gratitude but also that of all Timorese, who will never forget who are their true friends.

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen,

This year, as you know, we commemorate important dates that symbolise our still most recent process of “State Building and Nation Building”.

It is fundamental that the young people here present, above all consider that they are part of the new Timorese intellectual elite, who understand well the process and know well our history.

Always keep in your minds that our independence, of which the 10th anniversary we celebrated on 20 May, was achieved with much suffering.

That you never forget that during our short existence as a State, we committed various errors and experienced cyclical periods of instability; we stumbled in the gigantic and difficult task of building and we had to appeal for international assistance to help us restore and maintain public order.

But in the actual rhythm of building the State and the Nation, we have been looking to learn from our mistakes and have been distancing ourselves from difficult circumstances that enfold a country with a recent past of conflict and violence.

These last few years have, fortunately, been years of peace and security, allowing us to build the foundation to make our nation grow, to build our nation and direct our efforts to combat poverty.

Still in this year of 2012, in a frank climate of peace and stability, two rounds of presidential elections were conducted and were considered free and fair by the international community and in July, the Timorese people returned to the polls to elect the V Constitutional Government.

This new Government was invested with the mission to proceed with the consolidation of fundamental institutions of a peaceful and democratic nation and to guarantee the continuation of the growth of our economy.

We have been witnessing the gradual withdrawal of UNMIT (United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste) and of the ISF (International Stabilisation Force), thus ending the peacekeeping operations in Timor-Leste.

This is a new phase in our history, where we assume, exclusively, the reins of our destiny. It is up to all of us Timorese, especially the young people of this nation, to assume now the responsibility to contribute to ensure that there is no regression in this period of consolidating the gains achieved in terms of peace and stability.

It is in this spirit that we close the celebrations of this year, on the 28th November in Same, celebrating the 37th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Independence and 100

years since the last rebellion against Portuguese rule, which became known as the Revolt of Manufahi.

We hope that these dates, celebrated in this year of 2012, link us to the more recent past of the struggle for independence and the older roots that made us unique in the regional and world context, and also serve to affirm our sovereign Nation of peace, tolerance and development.

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear graduates,

Our objectives for State institutional building legitimise a strong investment in the development of our human resources and generally, in the social capital of the nation.

The Strategic Development Plan places great emphasis on the human dignity that should be above any other interest.

The State has the obligation to meet the necessary conditions so that the Timorese, who are the true wealth of the nation, are healthier, more learned and have greater access to justice, information and culture.

This is a premise to building a just and developed Nation.

Presently, Timor-Leste has 13 medical specialists, 139 general practitioners, 1271 nurses and assistant nurses, 427 midwives and 416 health technicians.

To these numbers, we add today's graduates.

Despite not yet being possible for Timor-Leste to be able to rely merely on its own cadre, and having to continue to seek qualified external labour, we are little by little working to achieve this goal for the near future.

As such, it is important that you not forget that your studies do not end today. Today's ceremony does not represent the closing of a book but the beginning of a new chapter.

The career you have chosen is very demanding and in today's global world, where we are witnessing constant changes, only those who continue to increase their knowledge, those who with an open spirit seek to be continually updated are professionally successful and can participate better in the development of society.

Dear graduates,

The challenges that you will face in your profession are the challenges that the nation itself faces.

My appeal to you is that you concentrate with determination in carrying out your mission, so that our country appreciates the new generation of intellectuals and professionals. The people will be very sad if you start demanding more in terms of your rights and forgetting your duties to serve the sick who need your help with care and devotion.

Around half of the population live in conditions of extreme poverty, with difficulties of guaranteeing their own food security and precarious basic infrastructure, which obviously has direct implications on the people's general state of health.

The infant mortality rate is 44 deaths out of 1000 live births. The mortality rate of children under 5 years of age is 64 deaths in every 1,000 children, with 53% suffering from chronic malnutrition and 49% of malnutrition. The incidence of tuberculosis and malaria is still excessively high, with 133 for every 100,000 people and 104.2 in every 1000 people.

Only 64% of the population have access to potable water and 43% to basic sanitation.

These are the challenges that we have to resolve in a whole of government form, where the shortage of qualified human resources is still our major obstacle.

This is the image of Timor-Leste with 10 years of independence.

In September 1999, I participated in the Millennium Assembly in New York where the United Nations established the Millennium Development Goals, known as MDGs, to be achieved by 2015. Only in 2002 was Timor-Leste able to commit to the MDGs.

As you all know, the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recently established a High Level Panel to look at the problem and outline an agenda for after 2015 because not one developing country is able to fulfil a single MDG.

Everyone knows as well that Timor-Leste has a person on the High Level Panel, based on her own merit and for the leadership that Minister Emília Pires is assuming of the group of fragile nations, known as 'g7+'.

The Government is working in preparation to host a meeting in February 2013, where specialists from various parts of the world will gather and discuss here in Dili, how to present concrete proposals to the High Level Panel that is advising the UN Secretary-General.

The Government in the next five years will continue to invest in the development of the health sector at various levels:

At the institutional and legislative level, covering management, support and resources so that the health service delivery is carried out with efficiency, professionalism and celerity. We are looking at private health services that will be an integral part of the

national health system and on the provision of essential medications, on diagnostic systems and supply of blood.

At the health infrastructure level, from the refurbishment and construction of Health Posts across the country, to the refurbishment of health community centres and the expansion of the National Hospital and the five referral hospitals.

At the general health level, from nutritional programs, above all for children and mothers, to vaccination programs, access to potable water and basic sanitation and education on the prevention of illnesses. Maternal and infant health, particularly in terms of reducing the infant mortality rate, will continue to be a priority.

And we will continue to invest heavily in human resources development until we achieve the objective of having at least one doctor, two nurses, two midwives and one laboratory technician in each Suco of the Country (with at least 2,000 habitants).

This is the vision of sustainable development that we have for the country. Timor-Leste can only truly be free when the day comes when it has the capacity to provide the essential services to its people and when these services are delivered by the sons and daughters of these same people.

Today, with your graduation, we are a little closer to this goal.

Congratulations and every success!

26 November 2012
Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão