



**P R I M E
M I N I S T E R**

**ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
AND MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND SECURITY
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO ON THE OCCASION OF THE 12TH INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES ASIA SECURITY SUMMIT**

THE SHANGRI-LA DIALOGUE

**SECOND PLENARY SESSION
“DEFENDING NATIONAL INTEREST, PREVENTING CONFLICT”**

**1 June 2013
Singapore**

Dr. John Chipman, Director-General and Chief Executive, IISS

Itsunori Onodera, Minister of Defence of Japan,

Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Participants and Heads of Delegations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to take part in this already important forum, so instrumental for promoting peace, security and cooperation, both within our region and at the global level.

As I am about to undertake an Official Visit to Singapore, and since I am also the Minister of Defense and Security, I could not let the opportunity pass to be here at the Shangri-La Dialogue. The excellent organisation of this Dialogue is a tribute to the efficiency and generosity of the Government of Singapore.

I must also congratulate this initiative by the IISS which, for the last 12 years, has been bringing together speakers from all over the world in the area of defence, to analyse and debate fundamental themes which often go beyond defence in its strictest sense.

Today, investment in strategic cooperation in the areas of defence and security would mean building solid foundations for peace and development.

Therefore, it is gratifying to see that, in recent times, there has been a growing collective concern regarding regional and global matters. Many debates have been held seeking to better understand the spectrum of possible threats and the variety of challenges that we have in common.

As Ms Ashton said before me, the threats and challenges range from economic shocks to socio-economic distortions, from demographic trends to climate change, from the lack of essential resources to environmental degradation, from terrorism to transnational crime and from piracy to latent and emerging conflicts.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to remember that around 1.5 billion people are living in areas affected by fragility, organised crime or conflict. Around 20% of the world's population face extreme situations of poverty, hunger, disease, exclusion and abandonment every day, while peacekeeping operations have been, at best, extremely expensive.

The fragility and the poverty of people and of their respective nations are at the end of the day, constant threats to the overall security of humanity.

Even with only eleven years as a State, Timor-Leste knows well these challenges, not only because we are one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia, but also because

our recent history registered periods of war and conflict, which undoubtedly shape the way in which we view challenges of security and of development.

What we learned in Timor-Leste, from our own experience, is that development cannot be achieved and universal democratic principles and values cannot be assumed, without security and internal peace.

We had to stop fighting among ourselves, and to learn to conciliate our differences peacefully, before we could even begin to properly address the Millennium Development Goals, which gave hope to Timor-Leste, and to many fragile States throughout the world, at the beginning of this new millennium. And we soon realised that not a single MDG will be reached in 2015 by any fragile State.

Fundamental issues such as development policies, and approaches to security and defence, require a radical change of mind-set in the decision-making centres of the globalised world.

The world needs a new paradigm, where international leaders have the courage to decide on options for intervention when really motivated by the genuine needs of each nation and their people, and respond to the true political needs of each peace process, rather than being obliged by economic interests.

There is a crying need to correct the policy of labelling people, organisations and States as 'enemies', which leads to inflexible and radicalised positions. Because, instead of searching for solutions, it fosters exclusion and isolation and feeds hatred and vengeance. The world, as a result, is experiencing an uncontrollable crisis of violent confrontation between civilisations, cultures and religions, surpassing, in nature and character, the open conflict of the anti-colonial era and the Cold War.

Therefore, it is necessary that States acknowledge the need to apply a 'new diplomacy' that will give more space for dialogue and for more contacts, which requires perseverance. Strategic partnerships for the promotion of peace and stability must go beyond States, focusing more directly on the true causes of conflict. The option taken by international institutions through reactive interventions in places and regions of conflict, usually involving expensive war apparatus, has been proven that it cannot bring a solution by itself. Room must be given for a greater effort for prevention, through consensus and pragmatic understandings without losing sight of the dignity of the people and national sovereignty.

And speaking of dignity of people and of national sovereignty, I would now like to touch on the concept of 'defending national interests'. Humanity lives in extremely complex times, where this concept of defending national interests of a nation, when disassociated from a real global perspective, can instead of preventing conflict provoke new centres of tension.

What may appear to be defending legitimate national interests can, from another angle, involve irreversible adversities for others. And these, ladies and gentlemen, end up contributing to a spiral of threats in the form of acts of provocation, or demonstrations of force, or surges of crime, acts of terrorism, influxes of illegal immigration, among other things, which reach innocent victims in various parts of the globe.

A new concept of global defence that favours promoting peace should be instilled in a spirit of diplomacy that goes beyond leaders, so as to cover all active stakeholders that represent the interests of the peoples of the world and who can contribute to dialogue and to the strengthening of inclusive cooperation.

As such, building trust between countries is a more important and safer investment, than preparing for war, and should be the base of new strategic alliances that must not exclude any State – whether small or large – regardless of culture, religion or ideology.

Due to the interdependency between States in today's globalised world, it is imperative that they work together towards a common goal. This is so rare with today's global decisions where more emphasis is placed on the primacy of the economic order, already perverted as the crisis that is affecting the world is showing.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen

Despite the austerity faced by the majority of countries in the world, the Asia-Pacific region has achieved notable progress, allowing for various emerging economies to grow and lifting millions of people out of poverty.

For those who live in this region, which is becoming more and more the centre of global economic and strategic weight, there should be a sense of pride but also a sense of responsibility to the lesser developed nations of the world.

What inspires us in the Asian Century, or if we prefer the Asia-Pacific Century, can (or should), in the architecture of geo-strategic relations, place new contours on the course of global order (or to put it better, correct the course of actual global disorder), so that we can all be capable of facing the new security challenges with a common vision less belligerent for the good of all humanity.

Despite growing tensions in our region, we must trust that international leaders will turn the words spoken in good faith into constructive action – under the auspices of true dialogue, by building the strategic trust, as the Prime Minister of Vietnam outlined in his speech last night - so that we may leave these concerns behind and focus on the needs of the people.

In Timor-Leste we have been adopting public policies that have allowed for a sustainable development framework.

We have achieved some successes, including high economic growth rates, progress in human development, consolidation of peace and stability, and above all the strengthening of the relationships of friendship and partnership that we have with many countries in the world, especially those within our region.

Our defence and security challenges are common to every country. We believe that Timor-Leste has a strong role to play on the geo-strategic scene, not because of any military and defence capability, but towards contributing with an environment of stability in the region.

It is also in this sense that we are so committed to becoming a fully-fledged member of ASEAN. An effective response to the challenges ahead for the countries in this community requires a collective approach and close cooperation between the neighbours in the region.

I repeat here the appeal I made at the Third Jakarta International Defence Dialogue in March this year about the real situation facing Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu that are drowning day after day as they disappear into the vastness of the ocean. The developed countries, who are the main contributors to climate change, must, by moral obligation, think of a Marshall Plan of financial compensation that will allow these countries to save their dignity as States and as Peoples.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, defending national interests with the view to prevent presumed conflicts, can nurture an environment of hostility and distrust, if frankness and honesty are not the basis of dialogue between nations.

The defence of a country's borders and its maritime area is not exclusively confined to the defence forces that it has at its disposal. This is instilled in a broader concept of security, with implications for those smaller countries that, for obvious reasons, are still developing their own concept of national security, naturally giving priority to the security of the population and its wealth.

Small and defenceless countries, such as Timor-Leste, are concerned with the movements of big powers, that are strategically positioning their forces as though preparing for a future of military confrontation. Between who? This is a question that can only be answered by the analysts and decision-makers of the world.

The challenge for us is to find out whether this is to discourage us, when we address matters of sovereignty concerning our resources, with the logic that results from the conflicts created by the powerful to defend so-called national interests.

Many internal instabilities, in various countries, were provoked to promote fragility in these nations so as to protect multi-national interests. In this case, the possible enemy has no face.

In today's time, when defence is fed by so many technological advances and when in other regions we see war being waged with faceless technologies, in our region it should be different by giving a human face to this debate.

It should be different by reinforcing that peace is made by, and for, people.

It should be different by investing in dialogue and strategic cooperation and by recognising and benefiting from our similarities and our inequalities.

It should be different by presenting to the world a region that embraces different historical experiences as the ones of Timor-Leste and Singapore, or, with a difficult common past as with the case of the now excellent relations between Timor-Leste and Indonesia, so that our community of nations may inspire a safer and more prosperous world for all peoples and all humanity.

Thank you very much.

1 June 2013

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão