



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

**OPENING ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY
THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
TIMOR-LESTE KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO AT THE WORKSHOP
ON PEACEKEEPING TRANSITIONS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM
THE UN MISSIONS IN TIMOR-LESTE**

“TIMOR-LESTE ON THE VERGE OF THE TRANSITION”

**Nigerian Permanent Mission, New York
10 October 2013**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure to speak today at this important workshop on peacekeeping operations and the lessons learnt from the various United Nations Missions in Timor-Leste.

I would like to commend and thank the Government of New Zealand and the New Zealand Permanent Mission for convening this workshop jointly with the Timor-Leste Permanent Mission. And I would also like to thank the Nigerian Permanent Mission for providing the venue for this two day workshop.

We are fortunate that this workshop has many distinguished participants and speakers including Her Excellency Ms Helen Clark, the United Nations Development Program Administrator, the Honourable Ms Anne Tolley, New Zealand Minister of Police and His Excellency Mr Finn Reske-Nielsen, Former Acting Special Representative of the Secretary General for Timor-Leste.

We are also pleased to have here with us, His Excellency Dr José Ramos-Horta, our former President and now the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau, where we, and Dr. Mari Alkatiri, the Leader of the Opposition and former Prime-Minister of Timor-Leste, have just come from.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To commence the topic of this workshop, allow me to start by describing, in a general picture, the long journey of the UN intervention in our country.

The UN came to play a vital role in a precise moment in the history of our liberation.

For more than two decades, the Timorese people were abandoned to their fate, and year by year, the votes in favour of a “fait accompli” were increasing, until Kofi Annan became the UN Secretary-General. His personal commitment to our case brought to fruition an agreement on the 5th of May 1999, between Indonesia, Portugal and the UN.

UNAMET was the first Mission to our country with a mandate to organise and supervise the popular consultation, which took place on 30th of August that year. Ian Martin and his team did a great job under very difficult conditions.

After the Referendum, and because the May Agreement stipulated a transitional period of administration under the UN, UNTAET led by the late Sergio Vieira de Mello was established.

Feeling marginalised from the process, the Timorese demanded better participation. Consequently, Dr. Mari Alkatiri was appointed Chief Minister, in order to prepare the Timorese to take part in the decisions about our own future.

In this regard, a National Council was established in 2001 with the role of reviewing and endorsing the UNTAET policies which included regulations, budget proposals and plans.

The National Council debated and approved a Transition Plan that would end with the handover of sovereignty.

That Plan provided for the realisation of the first ever elections for a Constitutional Assembly in 2001, to debate and approve the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

UNTAET helped to set up the institutional foundations of our State. It was very important! But, we can note a big mistake – instead of working in the spirit of the Mission by looking at rebuilding some administrative infrastructure for the new State, the Mission was spending large amounts of money paying for UN personnel under so called “technical assistance”. That technical assistance was regulated by UN criteria that seemed disastrous, although in some specialised areas there were very professional individuals.

But the problem was this:

1. Timor-Leste was considered so dangerous that the majority of the staff was there for only 4 to 6 months to allow others to come, as part of the rotation of solidarity among humanity from the four continents of the globe.
2. We dealt with many staff and the only expertise they had was that they had also been posted to missions in conflict affected countries.

On the other hand, in the security sector, INTERFET was crucial in putting an end to the violence by pushing the pro-Indonesian militias out of the country. They did a very good job that resulted in our people gaining confidence and coming back to their communities.

Not being at all involved in the violence before or after the popular consultation, our Guerrilla Forces were so ill-treated that we had to invent a fake list of widows and orphans to get some food for them.

The UN Mission was incapable of making the right decisions due to their lack of understanding of the local reality and the history of the country.

Very soon, the Peacekeeping Forces were deployed. I must tell you that we are still enjoying some bridges that were built by the Bangladeshi and Pakistani forces, as a

small contrast to the thousands of military personnel from other countries that were going around our tiny homeland.

On 20 May 2002, UNTAET ended its mission. UNMISET was established, led by Kamallesh Sharma, to continue to provide assistance in many areas, especially in the defence and security sectors, with a mandate extended to 2005.

The State of Timor-Leste was at its beginning, without money, without its own financial capacity, with no experience in governance, without basic infrastructure and with a demanding society that believed that independence would bring benefits to everyone immediately.

These conditions did not allow the Government of Timor-Leste to respond to the demands that were emerging from all sectors of society. This caused social tensions that later dragged into other institutions such as the Military and Police Forces and led to the 2006 crisis.

There are people who defend the argument that the UN Mission and Peacekeeping Operations should not have withdrawn so soon.

I do not share this view because the mere presence of both without changing the policy of simply spending the money of tax payers of other countries, without putting into action concrete plans of assistance, the situation of social tension would have continued.

I say this because following the crisis we sought help and UNMIT and the ISF came to support us - UNMIT with a large UNPOL personnel and the ISF with its big military apparatus. This did not, however, prevent Dr. Ramos-Horta from being attacked and wounded at his residence. After this tragic incident, I was witness for more than a week to the inability of the two international institutions to provide an adequate response to the situation.

We can all recall that at that time, I asked the two institutions to restrict their movements and to allow us, the Timorese, to take the lead on the operations to restore security.

And we did just that without a single bullet being fired. And after that we returned to working on the reform plan for our security and defence forces.

The lesson that can be drawn from the presence of the Peacekeeping Forces and UNPOL is that instead of appearing as forces to secure stability, which is a very expensive exercise, they should have a plan to directly and intensively assist the sectors in need without incurring huge costs.

Meanwhile, I must acknowledge the concrete bilateral support from some countries in the area of defence and security, especially the support given by Australia to our own forces and by New Zealand and Portugal to our police.

It was with this thought of providing concrete support that we sat together with UNMIT to draw up an integrated plan within a specific timeframe that would allow for all to see the concrete results. Although this took some time, what we all should agree is that the Plan had successful results.

Only with the understanding of the international organisations can there be good cooperation with the beneficiary States such as that which took place in Timor-Leste.

In this context, the lesson should be to cooperate with the leadership of the country, so as to ensure ownership of the process and in doing so avoid having so many programs that do not meet the real needs of the country.

Fortunately, the Timorese prepared a Strategic Development Plan which allows for international support that can provide a better mechanism for assistance in critical areas of development.

It was in this context that it was agreed with the UN that after UNMIT we could begin to explore a new mechanism for our relationship with the UN, hence having only a non-resident UN Special Adviser for Timor-Leste reporting directly to the UN Secretary-General.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to reaffirm here our profound gratitude not only to all those countries that contributed to the Peacekeeping Forces but also to the men and women who served in the different UN Missions in Timor-Leste and I repeat what our President of the Republic said at the UN General Assembly last month “The partnership with the UN throughout the last decade, achieved remarkable success”.

The United Nations family has been an integral part of the early years of the history of our nation and helped to build the foundation of a stable and democratic State. Our people will be always grateful for the contribution of the United Nations and the international community to our country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have emerged from conflict to pursue development with unrelenting focus guided since 2011 by our 20 year Strategic Development Plan.

We have a small but emerging economy that is providing balanced and sustained growth.

We have always known that the true strength of our nation is our people which is why our Strategic Development Plan is focused on improving health, education and training and social inclusion. We know that we need healthy and educated people to build our nation.

We are developing institutions that operate to strengthen professionalism and accountability in the public administration.

While we know that we have a long way to go, and that many of our people are still not experiencing the life they expected, and that they deserved, on independence, we are heading in the right direction.

The United Nations has been our partner in this process of building peace, and our State, and our successes are also the UN's successes.

In this regard, I wish to acknowledge the work of my dear friend, Atul Khare, as SRSG and to his successor, Ameerah Haq, and to commend the achievements of Finn Reske-Nielsen who worked tirelessly with his team to make the transition as smooth and successful as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since December last year Timor-Leste has been a truly sovereign nation – standing on our own two feet.

We know that the process of consolidating the State has still not finished, while we are taking steps to build the nation.

I am pleased to say that following the successful completion of the UNMIT transition, Timor-Leste and the UN have established institutional arrangements to ensure that we maintain positive and supportive relationships.

Our country continues to be supported by UN agencies that are dedicated to improving the lives of our people.

And as I mentioned before, we are particularly pleased that Dr Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and Under-Secretary-General, has been appointed as the Special Adviser of the United Nations Secretary General for Timor-Leste. We are working well with her in this special role and look forward to building on the foundation of success and support that we thank the UN for.

Timor-Leste has new confidence in its future. We see the promise of our nation in our people who, having given so much for their liberty, will dedicate themselves to an inclusive development.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a member of the United Nations, and leading the g7+ group of 18 fragile and conflict affected nations, I cannot let this occasion go by without recalling that we have just come from Guinea-Bissau.

I understood from my time there that the United Nations is making the opposite mistake of the large amount of funding provided for Timor-Leste and has provided a lack of funds to Guinea-Bissau, which makes the mission of the SRSG, my dear brother, Dr. José Ramos-Horta, a difficult one.

The people of Guinea-Bissau, from all sectors of society who were contacted by Dr. Mari Alkatiri and myself, assumed collective responsibility for what took place in their country since 1980. We understood during our four days there the frustration of all and their intense desire for change.

All were able to understand that the sanctions imposed had a positive role in influencing the collective conscience to accept that the terrible situation could no longer continue. They all expressed this simple word "ENOUGH".

They made a declaration of principles to demonstrate to the international community their total commitment to the restoration of constitutional order in their country.

In this document, they appealed to the international community to reconsider the sanctions, with the view of allowing for the initiation of a credible electoral registry as quickly as possible that would be finalised before the end of this year, so as to enable elections to take place at the end of February next year.

According to our calculations, a minimum budget of \$USD 5 million is needed to prepare the electoral registry. Timor-Leste has already offered \$USD 1 million dollars. I believe that with a fund managed by the UNDP, supported by Timorese, we can at least commence this vital process to guarantee free and credible elections.

When I say a fund managed by UNDP, I wish to stress that these funds should not be solely diverted to technical assistance and civic education. Timor-Leste has people on the ground to help define not only a calendar for action but also the items required such as equipment and operational costs. The next step will be to assist the elections.

If we want to help the people of Guinea-Bissau to have a new future, we have to help now! They are all committed to focus on the electoral process. However, from the Government of Guinea-Bissau, we learned that besides the electoral process, there are also very urgent social needs that must be addressed to allow for stability for the elections.

I urge the international community to take this into account if we want a new State where the rule of law prevails, where social justice can be achieved and where society can participate with new confidence in the future.

The Timor-Leste Permanent Mission in New York will, in due course, deliver to you copies of the signed declaration of principles that I have referred to.

On behalf of the g7+ group, I believe that it is the right time to give a hand to the suffering people of Guinea-Bissau.

Thank you.