



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

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE KAY RALA XANANA
GUSMÃO TO THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMISSION OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE ON REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND
INTEGRATION IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

BANGKOK

19 DECEMBER 2013

H.E. Mr. Toke Talagi, Premier of Niue,
H.E. Dr.Noeleen Heyzer, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive
Secretary of ESCAP
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Chair of the sixty-ninth session of the Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific I would like to thank Dr.Noeleen Heyzer for organising this very important ministerial conference on regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific.

The Asia Pacific region has been a global driver of economic growth. It is home to many of the world's emerging economies that have been lifting millions of people from poverty. We are starting to see, however, a slowing in emerging countries as the drag of the global economy takes hold.

The world is still recovering from the damage caused by the Global Financial Crisis and this is impacting the nations of our region. For many countries, especially in Europe, we have seen the Global Financial Crisis become a Sovereign Debt Crisis. This is slowing international recovery and is hurting our region's export markets. It means that the nations of our region are having to look not only to increased domestic growth to make up for this shortfall, but to increased economic cooperation and integration in the Asia Pacific. That is why this conference is so important.

We avoided the worst of the Global Financial Crisis because our nations worked together and agreed on stimulus measures. Many of these measures have now run their course and it is time to again come together to work towards increased regional and global cooperation. The outcomes of this cooperation may include increased regional trade and investment as well as further stimulus measures in the areas of infrastructure and access to basic sanitation, education and health services that will re-charge growth and improve the lives of our people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A critical element in the agenda for regional economic cooperation and integration discussed in the documentation for this meeting is connectivity, including physical transport, energy and ICT infrastructure.

In Timor-Leste we understand well the need for increased regional integration to achieve our national vision of a diversified and sustainable economy that supports a healthy, prosperous and well educated population. While we have enjoyed average rates of economic growth of 11.9% since 2007, we know that without regional cooperation our progress will falter.

And so, we are going to build a new national port and our new international airport to enhance regional trade and investment and promote our tourist industry. To ensure connectivity with the region and the world we will be bringing a sub-sea internet cable to Timor-Leste and we are developing a petroleum hub and supply base on our south coast to support the regional oil and gas industry. As well as these physical projects, Timor-Leste is increasing integration through an extensive regional scholarships program under our Human Capital Development Fund and with our bid to join and contribute to ASEAN and other multilateral bodies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

When we look to improving regional economic cooperation and integration there is one issue we must keep at the front of our minds. While some countries are becoming increasingly prosperous, others remain stagnant or face great challenges.

Continued and entrenched inequality will also create worrying global and regional risks. This year we have seen major street protests across the world including in such important nations as Brazil, Turkey, Egypt and in Europe itself. In part, these protests have been driven by grievances around economic and political inequality and they demonstrate that social cohesion and stability are being put at risk by rising inequality.

We must ask how we can work towards spreading the growing prosperity of our region to reduce extreme poverty and to achieve inclusive and balanced growth. Given this, a key question is “How can those countries that are being left behind benefit from the dynamism and growth of the Asia Pacific?” In answering this question, we must work towards forms of regional economic cooperation and integration which most effectively spread prosperity and development among all countries.

As well as inequality between nations, we must also be alert to the remarkable growth in our region leading to inequality *within* nations. Regrettably, our rising prosperity is not being enjoyed by all and we are seeing vast wealth accumulated by few while millions living in the same country remain in poverty. With the gap widening between the rich and the privileged, and the poor and the vulnerable, it is important to pursue social justice and inclusive economic growth.

We must ensure that all people are free from hunger and have access to health and education and the chance of a fulfilling life. To do this, we must all make sure our economies work to support people rather than operate in the interests of a privileged multinational elite and a corrupt global financial system.

From our perspective, to overcome these challenges, we are in a process of a trilateral cooperation with the eastern part of Indonesia and the northern territory of Australia, in order to establish an integrated development plan in all sectors.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The context of each nation is different and the circumstances of some countries require unique approaches to development but we must explore the possibility of common potential and the sharing of common goals.

As we approach the expiry of the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, we must recognise that not one fragile or conflict affected country achieved these goals. With over 1.5 billion people living in fragile or conflict affected nations, taking action to support these countries is one of the most pressing international issues of our time.

That is why the g7+ group of 18 fragile and conflict countries was established and is working in solidarity, and speaking with one voice, to build peace and strengthen our States. But now, we need more than 18 countries working together. With the world deciding on the post 2015 development agenda we must make sure that the global community does not forget the need to address security and development in fragile States.

And we must not forget the fragile nations in our own region, such as the Marshall Islands, Kiribati and Tuvalu in the Pacific, and Maldives in the Indian Ocean, that are slowly drowning as a result of climate change.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Despite the threats and the challenges that we face as a region we should be positive about the promise of our collective future. We have before us a unique opportunity to make development truly inclusive and sustainable and to lead the world's post-2015 development agenda.

Our region continues to drive the world economy and account for much of its economic growth which is creating jobs, opportunities and prosperity.

We, member States and associate members of ESCAP, represent countries with different cultures and histories and at different stages of development. This diversity is not a hindrance but a strength. It gives us opportunities to learn lessons, share good practices and explore approaches to overcoming common challenges. We need to create innovative regional cooperation partnerships, learn from our varied experiences and take responsibility for shared regional development.

Essentially, however, there is a need to enhance regional financial cooperation, because only by mobilising the financing for less developed countries can we boost trade and increase investment for infrastructure and, on the other hand, give positive signals by opening opportunities to private investors.

Last April we launched here the Zero Hunger Challenge. In our region, we can see that there are some countries improving food production but that still lack good access to markets within and beyond Asia-Pacific.

A good financial mechanism will take into account what we face in terms of inequality across our region and within each one of our countries. Only a regional economic integration scheme can narrow the development gaps that the Asia-Pacific region is facing today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In finishing my remarks, I would like to mention the inspiration that Nelson Mandela was to Timor-Leste, to our region and, of course, to the world.

In Timor-Leste's darkest moments in our struggle for liberation, as we were fighting in the mountains and valleys of our homeland, Mandela's story gave us hope. He showed us that we were not alone in our struggle and he validated our determination to never give up our dreams of freedom.

Nelson Mandela leaves our world with a remarkable legacy in which forgiveness is stronger than hatred; a world where solidarity is more important than self-interest; and a world where every person should be entitled to develop his or her potential regardless of country, class or gender.

I truly hope that as we mourn his passing, the legacy is not lost. Let us not only make statements of hope but take action for a better world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As Chair of the Commission, I congratulate all member States and associate members for your hard work, both during the senior officials segment concluded yesterday, and during two preparatory meetings earlier this year. I also congratulate you all for the draft of the **Bangkok declaration on regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific**, which will be considered for adoption. I believe that this declaration provides an effective road map to move the agenda for regional economic cooperation and integration forward.

We need to act together because isolated efforts will not succeed. And so, we must be committed to ending extreme poverty, hunger and exclusion with the recognition that economic growth can only be sustainable if the social well-being of all people is improved.

In conclusion, I look forward to working with you towards fostering reconciliation and dialogue to improve peace and social cohesion, that will allow a road map for development, through strengthening economic cooperation and integration in our region.

I am sure that acting together we can achieve a brighter future for our people and for future generations.

Thank you very much.

19 December 2013
Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão