



PRIME
MINISTER

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE KAY RALA XANANA
GUSMÃO AT THE BOAO FORUM FOR ASIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE
2014, “ASIA’S NEW FUTURE: IDENTIFYING NEW GROWTH DRIVERS”,
SESSION 12: REVIVING THE SILK ROAD: A DIALOGUE WITH ASIAN
LEADERS**

**Boao, China
10 April 2013**

H.E. Thongsing Thammavong, Prime Minister of Laos People's Democratic Republic

H.E. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan

H.E. Yang Jiechi, State Councillor, People's Republic of China

H.E. Zhang Guobao, Chairman, the Advisory Board, National Energy Commission of China

H.E. Surakiart Sathirathai, Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a special pleasure to be here as part of such an illustrious international panel to discuss Reviving the Silk Road; an initiative that has the potential to drive global growth and cooperation.

At this Boao Conference we are identifying growth drivers for Asia's New Future. These include technological progress, the rise of emerging markets, the expanding Asian middle class and the benefits of an interconnected and globalised world. The great value of Reviving the Silk Road is that it leverages off these emerging economic trends with a concrete initiative to strengthen trade as well as international peace, cooperation and friendship.

The initiative plans to revive the ancient overland and maritime routes that extended from China to Europe and Africa through Central, Southeast and South Asia. These routes, which were driven by the trade in fine Chinese silk, opened up the world and became important channels for trade and people to people exchange as well as the transfer of culture and ideas.

During a visit to Kazakhstan last October the President of China, H.E. Xi Jinping, proposed reviving the overland route from China through Central Asia to Europe. Taking in a population of over 3 billion people along this route the potential gains are vast. With parts of Central Asia suffering from a lack of modern rail and road networks, the Silk Road initiative has the potential to drive infrastructure development and super-charge growth and prosperity.

In a speech to the Indonesian Parliament in October last year President Xi Jinping also proposed the revival of the Maritime Silk Road between ASEAN nations and China. Later this proposal was extended through to South Asia and on to Africa and has been warmly received by countries along the route.

The maritime Silk Road dates back centuries to when Chinese seafarers made great voyages that reached as far as Africa's west coast. The Silk Road maritime routes travelled through some of the world's great ports establishing a road of friendship as well as of development.

Of course, for Timor-Leste, the revival of the fabled Maritime Silk Road is of most significance. China is Southeast Asia's largest trading partner and trade and investment continues to grow at a fast rate. ASEAN nations together have a population of around 600 million people and an economy larger than India's. With planned economic integration

towards a single market with labour and capital mobility and improved transport and communication connectivity the economic potential of a revived Maritime Silk Road route from Southeast Asia to China is enormous.

Ladies and gentlemen

We have seen the impact of economic growth for people in our region. With its outstanding public leadership and vision, China is growing and soon it will become the largest economy in the world. This growth has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty in what has been the greatest exercise in poverty alleviation in human history.

Through reviving both the overland and maritime Silk Roads the Chinese economic miracle can be spread across our regions with the potential for large scale improvement in the lives and circumstances of millions of people.

And so, the Silk Road can be revived as a road of sustainable development. As it winds through Asia we should make sure we see an improvement in peoples' lives - in health, in education, in the environment and in social well-being. And we should make sure that no countries along the road are neglected or left behind.

The initiative will also provide a framework in which countries, especially developing countries, can look to build much needed infrastructure including roads, railways, ports, telecommunications and oil and gas pipelines.

It is, of course, important to look beyond the economic, trade and infrastructure benefits of the initiative. The Silk Road has also symbolised tolerance and peace as it has supported people to people links as well the transfer of ideas, art and culture.

From this perspective, the Silk Road can be revived as a path of international solidarity and not just of trade. In promoting cooperation and dialogue the Silk Road initiative can support the development of a new model of international engagement which rejects the old ways of putting powerful and national interests ahead of human solidarity.

And the Silk Road can also be revived as a road of culture, art and heritage and not just of commerce. In this way we can bring meaning to the journey through spreading dialogue and the exchange of ideas.

Looking at the Silk Road through such alternative perspectives will allow us to achieve not only economic growth but promote and nurture tolerance, peace and understanding. All the countries along the route must make sure that we truly maximise the potential of the Silk Road for the benefit of all and not just the advancement of the few. We must work towards common prosperity and development and tackle rising inequality, national fragility and the oppression of the vulnerable and marginalised.

A revived Silk Road also provides a further opportunity to improve regional and international security and stability. In our unstable world, in which threats and conflict are more often than not caused by extremism and criminality, the Silk Road can provide a framework for international cooperation to combat terrorism and transnational crime.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Timor-Leste is a half island nation in Southeast Asia that has overcome conflict to establish a foundation of sustained high economic growth and stability. However, our future depends upon our connectivity. To achieve our vision of a healthy, well-educated and prosperous nation, with a sustainable and diversified economy, we need strong regional integration and cooperation.

That is why we are building new ports and upgrading our airports to make sure we are connected to the world to support trade and build a tourism industry. We will bring a sub-sea internet cable to our shore so that we are not caught on the wrong side of the digital divide. And we will bring a gas pipeline from our largest known petroleum field to our coast to build our onshore petroleum industry and drive our economy.

Without international connectivity Timor-Leste simply cannot progress and prosper. That is why the initiative of the Maritime Silk Road has such value to our country.

And in being a part of the Maritime Silk Road we would hope to also bring benefits to our neighbours. Being on the crossroads of Asia and the Pacific, Timor-Leste would like to play a role in linking the island States of the Pacific to Asia. And we can also act as a bridge between Asia and the Portuguese speaking countries of Africa. We know that a Maritime Silk Road will enable us to make these connections a reality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A revived Silk Road can be a new growth driver for the prosperity and peace of the Asian region and beyond. It has the potential to share and spread development opportunities and promote tolerance, peace and understanding.

I urge us all to work together in cooperation and solidarity so that we can realise that great benefits that a revived Silk Road can bring to our nations and our peoples.

Thank you very much.

10 April 2014

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão