



**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 OF THE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE, KAY RALA
XANANA GUSMÃO, AT THE 15TH MEETING OF THE
MINISTERS OF DEFENCE OF THE CPLP**

**“Reviewing International Matters and Political and Military
Implications”**

Lisbon, Portugal

26 May 2014

Your Excellencies,
Fellow Ministers of Defence of the CPLP,

Your Excellencies,
The National Directors of Defence Policy,

Members of the Delegations from the CPLP Member States,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly, I would like to convey my appreciation to the organizers of this 15th Meeting of the Defence Ministers of the CPLP in Lisbon. Its timing is particularly fortunate for me, as it enables me to visit three CPLP countries, attend the Inter-ministerial Meeting of the G7+ in Lome, and visit Equatorial Guinea. I would also like to thank the Portuguese authorities, including the President of the Republic, for the welcoming manner in which they have greeted me.

It is an honour and a pleasure to be here today with my fellow Ministers of Defence at this forum. We want to reflect together on Defence matters, so as to share experiences and needs, within this spirit of cooperation that guides us.

This is a particularly significant year for the Timorese regarding the CPLP, since we will be assuming the Presidency of the Community in July. Presiding over the CPLP during the 2014-2016 bienniums is both an honour and a great responsibility.

It is also a very special year for the CPLP itself, as it will come of age. Indeed, 18 years will have passed since its inception in 1996.

Reflecting on the international issues within the scope of Defence, it is important to mention that, in a way, Timor-Leste cannot see the problems of the world from the same perspective as the other CPLP members, due to its geographic distance from all of them.

Nevertheless, we thank the Portuguese contingent for giving us the opportunity of taking part in the peacekeeping operations in Lebanon.

Indeed, the international challenges we face are much more related with our Asia-Pacific region. Since we want to become members of ASEAN, we must pay attention to the threats and challenges affecting that part of the world.

Within the regional space of Timor-Leste, I have had the opportunity during the past few years of taking part in two international debate forums on the subject of Defence: the Shangri-La Initiative, in Singapore, and the Jakarta International Defence Dialogue. It should be noted that these forums commonly include the presence of representatives from military powerhouses such as the United States, Europe, China, Japan and Australia.

In addition to discussing current spots of tension in the region and in the world, these forums also enable us to improve ongoing dialogue in the search for peaceful solutions to our problems. The appeals and recommendations resulting from these forums are the product of open and honest discussions concerning the South China Sea, the Korean Peninsula, and certain internal conflicts in each country.

Unconventional threats deserve special attention from several countries, resulting in the search for closer cooperation mechanisms so as to enable a more effective response, both among neighbours and within the wider area.

Innovation, if we can call it that, regarding the utility of militaries in today's world, is connected with their preparation and readiness to respond to natural disasters.

Disasters like the ones that happened recently in Japan or in the Philippines, flooding in Southeast Asia, cyclones in the Pacific and the progressive victory of the Ocean over Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, are realities that must be faced by the Asia-Pacific region.

This requires a new direction for the military, so as to ensure broader tasks than merely "peacekeeping" operations. The military must be able to respond to natural disasters and do humanitarian assistance missions.

The United Nations, which had a representative in the Jakarta forum, acknowledge that the professionalism and discipline of the military are the bases for their selection to future missions. There may also be other forms of cooperation between the countries in the region.

Being a small country, Timor-Leste's ability to deal with these problems is reduced. Furthermore, our military capacity is limited and our human resources are not yet as skilled as they need to be. Still, we make it a point to be involved in this debate, particularly since it has implications to our National Defence.

The issue of maritime borders is particularly sensitive for Timor-Leste, as presently we are striving for their fair demarcation under the international law.

Your Excellencies,

We are a small island State, in which our coastal and maritime resources take on a vital strategic importance. Each year, Timor-Leste loses over fifty million dollars because of illegal fisheries. We are also worried about the security of the future platforms for petroleum exploration.

As such, Timor-Leste wants to strengthen its maritime component, so as to be able to protect the interests and the investments that are so important for the future of our people.

Nevertheless, we believe that social inequalities are and will continue to be the greatest challenge of our time, particularly in developing and less developed countries, where State agencies are weak and where democratic transition processes are difficult.

Social inequalities are the basis for internal conflicts that can spill over a country's borders, thereby making economic development processes much more difficult. In view of this, Timor-Leste and Indonesia signed a Letter of Intent in May 2012, seeking to promote contacts and debates in order to implement a sub-regional integrated development plan covering Timor-Leste and the three closest Indonesian provinces.

Upon learning of this sub-regional development strategy, the Northern Territory of Australia conveyed its keen interest in being a part of it. Consequently, a trilateral agreement is expected to be signed soon in order to realize this vision.

Our land borders also present challenges and new transnational threats to which we must respond, including the increase of migration flows or the smuggling of drugs and weapons.

The creation of the SZSME in the enclave of Oecussi already takes into account the mutually beneficial involvement of the closest Indonesian islands.

Although it wants to be part of ASEAN, Timor-Leste must be able to ensure, by itself, the security of its territory and its strategic interests and, more importantly, the safety of its people.

This requires technical assistance, and Timor-Leste has already benefitted in a very positive manner from the cooperation with our Portuguese-speaking brothers and sisters.

Consequently, I would suggest a deeper reflection on our Community's priorities in the area of Defence and Security. I believe that some programmes, like Feline Exercise, spend too many resources without having a clear impact on our peoples.

Our key goal, in a coordinated manner, should validate that impact.

In view of the challenges that lie ahead, today's solutions cannot be partial solutions. Our interests cannot be dissociated from a global perspective.

Even the challenges in the smallest countries have implications in terms of regional and global stability for the most consolidated countries. As such, being able to reflect together on our common challenges is a key part of the sector of Defence and Security. That is what we are doing here today.

The world is undergoing a serious crisis of confidence, due to the ineffectiveness in safeguarding universal principles. Developing or less developed societies face a crisis of leadership and a lack of collective vision on common interests, which prevent them from moving towards the values of the modern world. Indeed, it is all too common to see the military in various continents being used as a tool for repressing the fundamental liberties of the citizens.

Since the CPLP member countries cannot remove themselves from the commitments that we have towards the regional organizations or blocks to which we belong separately, we must adopt a new mechanism for strengthening our cooperation in the area of Defence and Security, so that we may promote Human Rights and social stability, while assisting the people in situations of great emergency.

Let us make use of this space of sharing in order to strengthen our ties of cooperation. We must see the world as it is in today's globalized context, with distances becoming smaller and the challenges of one country becoming the challenges of all countries. Indeed, our peoples are but a great community of dreams, values, social justice and human solidarity.

Thank you very much.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão
26 May 2014