



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

**ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER  
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE  
13<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF CPLP MINISTERS OF LABOUR AND  
SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

**“Extending Social Protection to all and its relation with the  
Labour Market, in favour of development and in the fight  
against poverty”**

**CNEFP, Tíbar  
1 May 2015**



Palácio do Governo,  
Avenida Presidente Nicolau Lobato,  
Dili, Timor-Leste

Your Excellencies

The Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs from the CPLP Member States  
and their representatives

Your Excellencies

The Representative of the CPLP Executive Secretary  
The Representative from the International Labour Organization  
Delegation Members from the CPLP Member States and Diplomatic  
Corps  
Speakers, Experts and Moderators of the Work Sessions

Ladies and gentlemen,

I begin by thanking all of you for being here today at this 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of CPLP Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs. The presence of CPLP leaders and technical officers in our country to discuss issues that may lead to improvements in the living standards of our people is an embodiment of the spirit and the goal that we share in the CPLP.

It is a happy coincidence that we should be assembled here today on International Worker's Day to jointly reaffirm the rights and guarantees of workers in our countries. As such, please allow me to pay public homage to all female and male workers from the nine CPLP countries, whom drive our economies forward, sometimes in situations of precariousness or uncertainty in relation to the future. (*I ask you to please join me in a round of applause for our workers*).

I am aware the technical and ministerial meetings held over the past week have resulted in several valuable inputs. The sharing of concerns, experiences and priorities, within framework of cooperation and friendship, has long been a characteristic of our Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries. I am certain the outcomes of this joint reflection will enable us to provide better responses to the challenges that we all face in regards to welfare protection and labour markets, as well as to define strategies for poverty reduction in our countries.

During the two years of Timor-Leste's rotating Presidency of the CPLP, we have the privilege to host our brothers and sisters for meetings of the utmost importance. Just two weeks ago, we had the opportunity of hosting the 1<sup>st</sup>

Extraordinary Meeting of Ministers of Education of the CPLP. I am pleased to note that these first sectorial meetings covered social areas.

The ideals of freedom for which we fought, not so long ago, as well as the economic growth that our countries have been trying to boost, will be for naught if our citizens do not feel that their living standards improve, if they lack access to the most basic services and if they do not have the possibility of developing themselves! Consequently, this discussion on welfare protection and its relationship to employment, development and the fight against poverty is particularly relevant and timely.

Your Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Welfare State is the political and economic option that we have chosen for Timor-Leste. We believe that this is the only way in which the State can assume the role of protector and promotor of the rights of the Timorese citizens, such as the right to health and education, thereby creating the necessary conditions for citizens to live full and dignified lives. Protecting those that have nothing and meeting the needs of the people are not forms of charity, but rather the responsibilities and obligations of the State.

The history of our struggle for independence, as well as the sacrifices of our People in for our Motherland, has clearly contributed to the selection of this model. Social justice is at the core of our society.

Consequently, we are ensuring that our Veterans are rewarded and honoured and we are guaranteeing support to our most vulnerable citizens, including widows, the elderly, orphans and the disabled. In addition to financial support; we include also food assistance programmes and the provision of welfare services. We also invested in programmes seeking to fight situations of inequality and social exclusion, in order to protect women and the most vulnerable households, including programmes to fund the health and education of their children, such as the “Bolsa da Mãe” programme.

Children and young people make up most of our population. The Government is committed to the transversal goal of “Protecting Children and Young People” and is creating a Commission for the Rights of Children, which will take welfare protection measures targeting children and young people.

Preventing and responding to abuses of minors, as well as fighting against all types of child exploitation and labour, are top priorities for us. Our children are our future. They are the promise of economic development for our countries and they are the ones who will sustain social welfare in the future!

We are adapting and expanding the current transitional welfare regime into a permanent, mandatory and contributory regime that is sustainable and that ensures welfare to all workers and to their dependants. In this we have been relying on the precious technical cooperation by Portugal and Brazil, as well as on the sharing of experiences and inputs from every CPLP country. I know that with the meetings that took place this week; the cooperation in this area will emerge stronger and I am greatly appreciative of this.

I would also like to convey my support to those who recommend that our Community should invest in public policies ensuring the Basic Level of Welfare Protection, in a manner that is interconnected and transversal with the different areas – economics, social and environmental – of sustainable development.

Welfare protection is an important instrument for achieving nearly all Millennium Development Goals, but unfortunately it is far from being a reality in the less developed countries. As such, it is very positive to see that welfare protection issues are at the forefront of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. We need to do much more to put people and their dignity above any interest and at the centre of our collective actions.

Your Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We know that the future of the Welfare State requires economic growth, as we need to sustain the education, health, housing and subsidiarity policies that we defend. Although welfare support needs to be part of a solidary society, the dignity of the human being requires that they are able to decide their role in society.

It is essential to create wealth by way of economic diversification and the creation of employment. The State needs to have financial resources that can be distributed to those who need them the most, and this involves having an

integrated strategy in which good governance and political stability are also factors of a prosperous and socially inclusive society.

The devastating effect of unemployment and the generalization of precarious employment have brutal impacts on our societies. A paid job is both an element of subsistence and an element of integration in the communities, thereby contributing to national stability. Unemployment generates frustrated and hopeless young people and adults who do not feel useful to their societies.

We are aware that this is a common problem affecting our community. The most recent demographic forecasts on Timor-Leste illustrate that our population is growing exponentially, which will require the creation of thousands of jobs every year.

As such, we need to find employment-generation strategies rapidly, as well as to focus on intensifying technical and vocational education that grants graduates entrance to the job market in areas that are mostly linked with the needs of the productive sectors of the country.

We know that the need for economic growth and job creation is common to every CPLP country, and that was why we wanted to give our presidency a new economic and business dynamic. Stimulating business projects in our countries, so as to develop the national private sectors and to transfer know-how and technologies, will contribute to strategic partnerships enabling us to make the most use of our regional integrations within the global economic system.

We can and we should use language as a tool for business, promoting our economies in the international forums where we are represented. This will also enable us to have a more active intervention in the global agenda.

I acknowledge that in Timor-Leste we are still facing the challenge of promoting and consolidating the Portuguese language. However, our people are used to overcoming difficulties and I believe that we will also overcome this challenge, which is important both in terms of our identity and in view of the economic potential that it represents for Timor-Leste.

Your Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over one billion people live in conditions of abject poverty. In addition to being extremely unequal, the world economy is creating serious challenges to the planet itself, including in what concerns food resources. We have also been witnessing environmental disasters that make the world's poor even poorer.

We at the CPLP reaffirmed in Maputo the importance of welfare protection in order to achieve food and nutritional security. Last July Timor-Leste launched the National Action Plan for "Eradicating Hunger and Malnutrition", seeking to eradicate hunger within ten years. This was a way to reaffirm the commitment we made to the CPLP's "United against Hunger" and to the United Nations' "Zero Hunger Challenge" campaigns.

We are presently drafting the "Standard Living Survey" on our population, to be released within the year. This document will help us to better adapt public policies to the needs of the people. We believe that the definition of clear strategies for ending poverty is intrinsically linked to job creation. Indeed, most people can only rely on their labour to develop themselves. However, this labour is entirely dependent from their health, their nutrition and the professional training and education to which they accessed. Consequently the State has a decisive part to play here.

Your Excellencies  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have just signed the Tibar Declaration and the Work Plan for the 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of CPLP Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs. These commitments, which fall upon our multilateral cooperation, will complement the programmes of each of our countries and will certainly contribute to results that once closely monitored, will gradually promote the well-being of our people.

In order for our societies to achieve sustainable development and fair social progress, it is necessary that all citizens enjoy dignified living conditions and have access to core services, so that they may live full and happy lives.

Our vision tries to meet everyone's needs by creating conditions that enable our citizens to overcome the most complex challenges and to have an active, autonomous, free and creative participation in the construction of our society.

As such, we are all called upon to participate actively. We can – and should – contribute, but we can also benefit.

And considering that today is workers' day – and since we have a lot of work ahead of us in the fight against poverty and social inequality – I would like to wish good work to everyone in creating better opportunities for our citizens!

Thank you very much!

Dr Rui Maria de Araújo  
1 May 2015