



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

**SPEECH BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE,  
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO,  
AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE  
NATIONAL LIBERATION COMBATANTS**

**Dili Convention Centre  
1 March 2016**



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

Your Excellency the President of the Republic and National Liberation Combatant  
Your Excellency the Speaker of Parliament  
Your Excellency the Deputy Speaker of Parliament  
Your Excellencies the Former Holders of the Sovereignty Bodies  
Distinguished Members of Parliament  
Members of Government  
Chief of the Defence Force  
Veterans of the Armed, Clandestine and Diplomatic Fronts

Distinguished guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In line with the role I have been given by the Sixth Constitutional Government, I would like to address the founders of the National Liberation Movement, veterans and combatants as well as other National Liberation staff, the willingness to develop a process for implementing the Law of the National Veterans.

I hereby welcome all Veterans, particularly our friends from the Diplomatic Front who came from Australia, Portugal, England, Macao and Mozambique. This is the first time they take part of this meeting that seeks to bring together our Veterans.

It is with great satisfaction and honour that I stand here today as the Head of the Sixth Constitutional Government in order to lead the start of this National Conference of Veterans. The event was organised by the Government in which it followed recommendations made by His Excellency the President of the Republic, from whom it was requested that the Government should hold a comprehensive consultation with all Veterans regarding a Decree-Law that seeks to define the legal structure of the Council of Veterans.

Over the next 3 days there will be several discussions on the '2003 Registration Process', as well as on matters of national interest. The Conference will end with the celebration of the National Day of Veterans and National Liberation Combatants. I would like to grasp this opportunity to convey my special gratitude to all our brothers and sisters in the Armed Front, in the Clandestine Front and in the Diplomatic Front. Despite the fact that you have received our invitations only recently, you are here today and I am certain that each of you will make an important contribution to this meeting, giving your testimony about what you have done. Regardless the resources available to us, everyone of these three interlinked fronts tried their very best, whether as leaders or members, whether within the structure of the resistance or individually, and it was this common effort during long and difficult times that enabled us to keep both our people and nation standed, as well as to ensure our own culture and identity.

Kindly allow me to continue by referring to the legal framework that the Government of Timor-Leste is in charge of, with the presentation of this Decree-Law to His Excellency the President of the Republic.

The State of Timor-Leste acknowledges and values its Veterans, as stated in the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. The contributions made by the Timorese towards the national liberation of Timor-Leste are reflected in the preamble of our Constitution. We all know that the voluntary contribution of each veteran to our national liberation struggle implied tremendous sacrifices, with thousands of veterans losing their lives and leaving orphans and widows behind, while some others became disabled. The 11<sup>th</sup> Section of the Constitution ensures protection to all those who joined in the resistance against foreign occupation, as well as to those maimed in the struggle of war, the orphans and dependants of the martyrs.

Following the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste on Veterans, the National Parliament approved Law no. 3/2006 on 12 April 2006, which sets the Statute of Veterans. It is through this legal framework that the State of Timor-Leste acknowledges and values the Veterans, providing them social and economic protection as a way of honouring and maintaining the memory of the resistance. This Statute also foresees the creation of a Consultative Council, made up by 7-15 Veterans. Under the Law, the Prime Minister appoints these veterans, so that they may advise the Government on matters related with the Veterans.

The National Parliament deliberated again on this Law in 2011, making a few changes. The 35<sup>th</sup> Article of the Law no. 2/2011, of 23 March, created a new body designated as the VETERANS' COUNCIL, with two major tasks:

- 1 - The Veterans' Council became a single body representing the interests of all Veterans;
- 2 - The Veterans' Council as a consultative body of Government.

Law no. 2/2011 tasks the Government of Timor-Leste the responsibility of setting the legal structure of the Council through a Decree-Law. In April 2015, and after consulting 22 organisations of Veterans and some representatives of the Veterans and National Liberation Combatants, the Sixth Constitutional Government submitted this Decree-Law to his Excellency the President of the Republic for promulgation. However, His Excellency the President of the Republic sent back the Decree-Law, requesting the Government to conduct a more comprehensive consultation of Veterans.

Considering that the March 3<sup>rd</sup> is the National Day of the Veterans and National Liberation Combatants, as presented in the draft Decree-Law, the Government decided to call a meeting with all the Veterans from the three Fronts in order to celebrate this day together. We will also be holding a National Conference to consider the number of people required to create the frames and form of the Veterans' Council, the number of people to be placed in each body as well as the specific roles to be played by each of these people. Additionally, we will also debate for the right method of electing the members of each body, the eligibility requirements, the decision methods of these bodies and the relationship between them and the Government, so that the Council meets its tasks as set in Law no. 2/2011. It is also important to consider the relationship that this organization, as a single representative

body under the Law, will have with other veteran and national liberation combatant organisations that were previously created and are still operating today.

Since the Conference will end on the day we pay homage to our Veterans, the Government of Timor-Leste wishes that it runs in an atmosphere of serenity and mutual trust, so that together we may find the structure that best reflects the will of everyone. Perhaps some may consider we should have a structure different from the one proposed by the Government; perhaps others may consider that Article 35 of Law no. 2/2011 should be revised in order to respond to the current situation. Please express to us your ideas during the discussions that will take place over the next three days. The Government will be receptive to every idea so that we can revise the draft Decree-Law - the copy of which has been distributed by the Organising Committee and is available to you.

On behalf of the Government, I would like to conclude by thanking all National Liberation Combatants, particularly the Founders of the National Liberation Movement, the Veteran Combatants and the relatives of the National Liberation Martyrs for your attendance. We hope that this National Conference may result in better cooperation, mobilising as well as possible the contributions made by the National Liberation Combatants for developing the country.

I trust that this National Conference will be of great success.  
Thus, I declare this National Conference of Veterans to be open.

1 March 2016  
Dr Rui Maria de Araújo