



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

**SPEECH BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF THE MARITIME
BOUNDARY OFFICE WEBSITE**

**Government Palace, Dili
29 February 2016**



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

Minister Counsellor, Chief Negotiator for Timor-Leste's maritime boundaries

Colleagues and members of the Government

Members of civil society

I see here the presence of the combatants of national liberation from Australia, Portugal, and England. I also see the presence of national combatants of liberation from Timor-Leste.

I would like to welcome you all to the Government Palace to the official launch of the Maritime Boundary Office website.

This is a very exciting occasion, as it marks the beginning of an important new tool to help us in our pursuit of permanent maritime boundaries.

As you all know, establishing permanent maritime boundaries is a matter of national priority for Timor-Leste. It is a priority due to our need to complete our sovereignty. It is the final step in realising our full sovereignty as an independent State. From our perspective, this is the second and last phase of our pursuit for the liberation of Timor-Leste.

It has been almost fourteen years since the restoration of our independence. We have made tremendous progress. We have made great socio-economic development - we have constructed the foundations of the State, the construction of the nation. We have moved from a fragile country towards strong development in different areas. But, our struggle for sovereignty will not be over until we have claimed our maritime sovereignty.

We, as you all know, share maritime boundaries with two big countries, our neighbours Indonesia and Australia. And because we have not delimited our maritime boundaries, there is uncertainty as to where our sovereignty lies and theirs.

This uncertainty causes issues in various areas, including security, immigration, fisheries and exploration of the maritime resources. These three nations are aware that the establishment of the boundaries is very important in order to resolve all of these issues.

That is why the previous governments, the fourth government and the fifth government under 'Big Brother' Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, and the sixth government which I currently lead - has determined that achieving permanent maritime boundaries with Indonesia and Australia is a national priority. We as the Government will continue with all of our efforts to achieve this objective.

There have been some positive steps forward, especially with the Indonesian Government. The Indonesian Government and Timor-Leste have agreed to start negotiating maritime boundaries based on international law.

In a meeting that was held in August last year with H. E. Indonesia's President, and recently in January when he visited our nation, there was an agreement to expedite the process. Since September 2015, there have been many meetings with Indonesia and we have agreed on the terms of reference to start negotiating.

On behalf of the State, the Government has nominated our Chief Commander Xanana Gusmão - our great leader of the resistance, now Minister of Planning and Strategic Investment, also Minister Counsellor. He has been nominated as the Chief Negotiator for maritime boundaries. When the Council of Ministers made the decision, some colleagues said: "there is no better choice - we have Timor's prize warrior."

Regrettably, we have not made progress with our neighbour Australia. Australia continues to maintain their position that the existing temporary treaties to share resources in the sea which has become the dispute between our two countries, meets the requirements of international law. But Timor-Leste says that is not the case.

And as you all know, before we restored our independence, Australia carved-out from the international dispute settlement body - UNCLOS, better known as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

And since then we have not moved forward. There is still ambiguity in Australia's position, particularly around issues of maritime boundary delimitation. A concrete example is 2004, during the process of negotiations, when Australia asked Timor-Leste to suspend the negotiations of maritime boundaries for 50 years. At the same time, Australia made an agreement with New Zealand on their maritime boundary, in accordance with UNCLOS and international law. In the joint-communique between Australia and New Zealand, they acknowledge that the treaty would "provide certainty of jurisdiction over both the water column and seabed, including over fisheries and petroleum resources." However with Timor they do not acknowledge these issues are equally important to us, and have continued to enforce the existing resource sharing arrangements.

So from Timor-Leste's perspective, this is not what we want. We need to have a really clear message when we talk about the delimitation of permanent maritime boundaries - we do not talk about sharing resources - that is a different case - we talk about where would Timor's boundary lie and where would Indonesia and Australia's boundary lie? Then we will know which resources, in which waters, belong to whom.

Therefore, we need to be clear to everyone that our aim is to delimit our maritime boundaries, not to gain a greater share of the resources - this is not our issue, our issue is to delimit our boundaries as part of the final phase of our sovereignty.

I think those are the important points that I would like to share with you all today.

This website will present a summary about our history, information on the relevant international laws, maps, and also some frequently asked questions, and it will help us develop a better understanding of the process we are facing.

Finally, I would like to invite Minister Xanana to come forward to officially launch the website with me.

I encourage everyone to explore this website to learn about Timor-Leste's determination to secure permanent maritime boundaries. I also ask of you to share the website with your

colleagues, friends and families, so we can all learn more about Timor-Leste's position, what we want and how we are going about it.

Thank you very much for your attendance and attention.

29 February 2016

Dr Rui Maria de Araújo