



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

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE,
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO**

AT THE

MERIDIAN INTERNATIONAL CENTRE

Washington DC, 23 June 2016

Thank you, Ambassador Holliday – for that generous and kind introduction – and thank you – all of you – for joining us here at the White-Meyer House.

I am pleased to be here and to be here for this robust exchange – sponsored by Meridian International which provides such an important service in short supply in the world today: breaking down barriers and helping people speak face to face and arrive at mutual understanding.

I was trained as a medical doctor. In medicine, we learned the importance of listening to patients, finding the facts, and trying to use reason to make a diagnosis.

That's good medicine. It's also good diplomacy.

And that's why we are here. We are a young country, a young democracy that wants to move from being a fragile State to being a successful State, a country that wants stability not uncertainty, and a country that believes in the rule of law and the promise of the rules-based architecture because that is how we restored our independence and our sovereignty in the first place.

It is easy to forget but I know many of you remember: fourteen years ago, Timor-Leste was the world's newest, sovereign nation, born of a bloody quarter century of occupation and resistance.

We persevered – and at a time when many questioned whether a post-Cold war world still needed things like the UN – where Ambassador Holliday did so much good work – Timor's independence proved that those institutions were still indispensable.

We lost one third of our population in war. But we gained new life in peace. That is the power of diplomacy.

We achieved restoration of independence because the international system worked for a tiny new country. And in that struggle, we took hope in the ability of countries to work together to solve differences.

What we need from the community of nations today is also what we can offer the world: renewed proof that while many question the efficacy of the international order, the rules-based architecture can still achieve fairness, self-sufficiency and sovereignty for all nations, big and small.

We'll have a chance to discuss all of that this evening – to discuss our efforts – under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea – to at last establish permanent maritime boundaries – because – even with independence, our maritime boundaries were left undefined, causing crippling uncertainty for our country.

To finish Timor's story, we don't have to solve hundreds of years of tribal hatred or thousands of years of sectarian hatred – we just need to solve our maritime boundary issue among friends and neighbours.

As you approach your own 340th independence day, we are all reminded that independence does not simply happen; it is built by many hands.

So we turn to the United States once again, and to all our friends and allies, to ask for your hands – and your hearts – to together ensure the successful journey of Timor-Leste to true independence.

Thank you very much.