



**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 ATLANTIC COUNCIL**

**Washington DC
21 June 2016**



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

Thank you for that generous and kind introduction – and thank you – all of you – for this warm welcome to Washington, D.C.

It is a long journey from my nation's capital of Dili here to your nation's capital. I was warned ahead of time of the words President Kennedy used to describe Washington, DC – a city he said “of Southern efficiency and Northern charm.” I can assure you, what I have discovered here has been nothing but the warmest and most generous of welcomes, which only reinforces the affection the Timorese people hold for the United States.

Our ties, of course, are not unlike what many countries feel for the United States – a sense of connection – a bond not just forged by shared interests, but shared values.

That is, of course, the essence of why the Atlantic Council was founded – in the very year that President Kennedy was inaugurated as President – at an turning point in history where so much of the west and the globe was choosing between ideologies.

55 years later, the Atlantic Council is still here helping to forge thoughtful discussion in a different world – not a Cold War world where the choice is between two ideologies - but a world where more and more the dividing lines and the choices are between successful States and falling States, stability and chaos, the rule of law versus the rule of force.

I am here representing 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 volatility, 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, the world descended on Timor-Leste to welcome its newest, sovereign nation, born of a bloody quarter century of occupation met by determined resistance.

Coincidentally, it was a time when so many questioned the relevance of international institutions in a post-Cold War world, but people like Brent Scowcroft know those institutions were indispensable and could be modernized for a new era – and Timor's independence demonstrated that solutions to seemingly intractable problems were within the world's grasp.

Presidents and Prime Ministers were proud because a United Nations force had helped stop the killing and successfully midwived our transition from occupation to independence. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, “Never before has the world united with such firm resolve to help one small nation establish itself.” But other words from the Secretary General resonated strongly with us: “independence will not mean the end of the world's commitment to you.”

I'm here in Washington because, now in peace as it was in war, we again turn to the community of nations to complete our long journey to independence.

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.

We'll have a chance to discuss all of that this evening – to discuss our efforts – under the United Nations 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 fishing, immigration, tourism and resources sectors.

Timor-Leste can again demonstrate to the world that an international rules based order can bring justice and liberty. Indeed, if we cannot achieve justice in the Timor Sea then we will all struggle to resolve the far more complicated challenges in our region, including in the South China Sea.

But more than that – I hope together we can again prove something to the world. We achieved restoration of independence because the international system worked for a tiny new country. Look around the world today – South Sudan, Libya, Syria... A lot of people are asking if the systems work today. They're asking if we can create order out of chaos. They're asking if the community of nations is only good at the beginning of things. In Timor, we can prove that the world has a longer attention span than that – that the international architecture can still deliver.

That's the assurance I hope to bring home to Dili. I will return home to a proud country where we have a twenty year economic development plan – Secretary Clinton called us “a model for country-led development” – but I return home to people who understand that if we can't count on sovereign rights to our seas then we can't keep pace with our immense development challenge.

More than 60% of our population is under the age of 25 and in need of sufficient food, education, health care and jobs. We must meet this challenge to transition from fragility to resilience and stability.

We must meet this challenge with your help. As you are just a couple of weeks away from your own 240th anniversary of the independence day, we are all reminded that independence does not simply happen; it is built by many hands. Elections don't make democracies – hard work does. And as we turn to the community of nations once again, and to our friends here at the Atlantic Council, we ask for your help to make good on the promise that our independence was the start – and not the end - of the world's commitment.

Thank you very much.

21 June 2016
Dr Rui Maria de Araújo