



PRIME
MINISTER

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY PRIME MINISTER
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
SEMINAR ON THE MARITIME AUTHORITY**

Dili
22 February 2017

Your Excellencies,

The Minister of Defence
Fellow Government Members
The United States Ambassador to Timor-Leste
The Ambassadors of those countries that are our friends
The Chief of the Defence Force
The Vice Chief of the Defence Force
The Commander General of the PNTL

Distinguished

Coast Guard Commanders
Participants and Observers

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to start by thanking the United States of America, in the person of their Ambassador to Timor-Leste, and the illustrious Coast Guard Commanders of the *US Pacific Command*, for their availability to co-host this seminar with the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Defence, where we will be able to share experiences and visions regarding the establishment of the system of Maritime Authority in Timor-Leste.

Since Timor-Leste is a maritime nation, with an Exclusive Economic Zone that is almost five times greater than our land mass, the sea becomes even more important for us. In addition to being an island with a considerable maritime dimension, we benefit from being strategically positioned.

The sea holds great economic value for us, not just in view of the exploitation of its living and non-living resources but also due to the potential of the imports and exports by sea, which represent around 90% of our economic activity. The sea is a resource for our economic diversification, and consequently for our development.

Additionally, the sea represents the safety and protection of our nation. It represents also the defence and security of our country.

In view of its strategic importance, the sea has been of ongoing priority and concern for and this is reflected in our key documents, such as the Strategic Development Plan, as well as in the Government plans.

Over the years, the Strategic Concept for National Defence and Security has been the subject of debates, reviews and consultations with several development partners, civil society organisations and, naturally, with the Superior Council for Defence and Security. The Strategic Concept was approved last year through Resolution no. 43/2016 of 14 December.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Strategic Concept for National Defence and Security reiterates the importance we give to the sea and the need to establish a system for Maritime Authority is one of the key outcomes of the Concept that we wish to implement, towards the protection and defence of our seas.

We are currently facing pressing challenges and threats, such as organised crime, illegal exploitation of living and non-living resources, particularly illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, environmental impacts and threats against biodiversity, to name a few. These result in substantial losses to the Timorese economy, since the sea is essential to our culture and our way of life, while representing a vital source of subsistence for our country.

Timor-Leste counts on the assistance and knowledge of its partners to establish its Maritime Authority system. We are also committed to contributing to regional and global maritime security – this includes contributions to the development and adoption of mechanisms, development of our skills, including support to navigation and the application of the International Law of the Sea, and so forth.

Maritime security cooperation is essential, given that the challenges are complex and often transnational in nature, thus requiring crosscutting and collective approaches.

Maritime cooperation in the region has been strengthened over the last few decades, with the multiplication of bilateral and multilateral initiatives.

And, Ladies and Gentlemen, Timor-Leste is no exception. In addition to seeking to implement its own Strategic Concept for National Defence and Security through an adequate Maritime Authority system, Timor-Leste also wishes to contribute to maritime security in the region, in accordance with our possibilities.

This seminar plays an important role in this process. We hope that discussions will be fruitful, to enable us to consolidate the know-how and competencies of our experts on these subject matters and which will truly contribute towards helping us understand the crux of an authority, particularly in what concerns maritime security and protection, maritime governance and management and, more importantly, coordination between multiple agencies.

On behalf of the Government, I would like to thank once again the Embassy of the United States of America for co-hosting this event. I also want to thank our partners, such as the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP) and GIZ Aid (German Agency for International Cooperation), for their unconditional support to his event.

I also want to thank especially the Coast Guard Commanders who travelled all the way from Hawaii to this side of the world to share with us their experience, know-how and competencies.

I hereby declare this seminar to be officially open. I trust that it will prove fruitful to everyone, particularly to us Timorese.

Thank you very much.

22 February 2017

Dr Rui Maria de Araújo