



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

**SPEECH BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST HIGH-LEVEL MEETING
OF THE ARCHIPELAGIC AND ISLAND STATES (AIS) FORUM**

**“FOSTERING COLLABORATION, ENABLING INNOVATION FOR OUR
OCEAN AND OUR FUTURE”**

Bali, Indonesia
11 October 2023



Palácio do Governo
Avenida Marginal
Dili, Timor-Leste

Your Excellency the President of the Republic, Joko Widodo

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government

Your Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a privilege to take part in this First High-Level Meeting of Archipelagic and Island States.

I would like to thank His Excellency President Joko Widodo for inviting me and the Government of Indonesia for its warm hospitality.

All countries represented here are united by the ocean.

The ocean gives us life. It connects humanity. It gives us common identities and shared challenges and ambitions.

This forum promotes cooperation and solidarity, so that together we can achieve sustainable development and marine conservation.

Like most Small Island States, Timor-Leste is vulnerable to climate change and the destruction of our greatest asset – our marine environment in all its diversity and wonder.

That is why last month Timor-Leste appeared before the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea in Hamburg at the historic Advisory Opinion case on States' Obligations concerning Climate Change and the Marine Environment.

While we are not all equally responsible for climate change, we will all suffer. And many small island states are already suffering more than the nations that caused the problem.

Recognising this, UNCLOS established the principle of common, but differentiated, responsibilities concerning the obligations of States.

Developing States cannot simply be left behind. We have a sovereign right to develop, and an obligation to protect our environment.

Like Indonesia, finalising our maritime boundaries is important to Timor-Leste. We have already settled with Australia, through the first-ever compulsory conciliation process under UNCLOS.

Now we are looking to finalise our maritime boundaries with Indonesia in a spirit of friendship and cooperation. Once we have concluded these negotiations with Indonesia, we will then be able to look at sustainable fishery projects in our seas and help put an end to the illegal fishing that is destroying our marine biodiversity.

We are also cooperating with Indonesia to establish a marine park for the sustainable management of our seas.

I would like this to be known as a Peace Park, not only for its symbolic value but to reflect its importance in conserving our biodiversity and our common development.

Timor-Leste and Indonesia are located in the Coral Triangle, an area with the highest marine biological diversity in the world.

Indonesia has established many wonderful national parks, including Komodo National Park which is so close to our country.

In Timor-Leste, we are developing a Blue Economy, as another pathway for development.

Initiatives like the AIS Blue Hub, the Research and Development Centre and the Blue Economy Development Index will support our endeavours.

Ataúro Island, that lies just 30 kilometres off shore from our capital Dili, hosts some of the most biodiverse waters in the world.

We are establishing a Marine Research and Education Centre on Ataúro Island and are preparing to declare the waters around the island a marine national park.

Friends, this forum is a welcome opportunity to embrace our shared connection to the ocean and work together to achieve sustainable development and marine conservation.

I conclude by conveying once more my appreciation to the leaders of Indonesia for facilitating collaboration among Archipelagic and Island States around the theme “For our Ocean and our Future”!

Thank you very much.