



PRESIDENCY OF THE
**COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY

OF INTERFET DEPLOYMENT

AND

**SITE BLESSING CEREMONY OF THE INTERFET PROPOSED
INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM**

**THE SPEECH FOR MINISTER OF THE PRESIDENCY OF THE
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

H.E. MINISTER AGIO PEREIRA

14 of September of 2024

10:00am

Former INTERFET Heliport

*Distinguished Guests, Members of the former INTERFET Community,
Veterans and Honoured Friends,*

On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary celebrations of the INTERFET deployment, we stand together at a sacred moment, as we come to bless this site, the former INTERFET heliport and honour the construction of the future INTERFET memorial and hopefully a museum, that will be a symbol of bravery, solidarity, and hope.

This momentous occasion is a time for reflection, gratitude, and celebration of a mission that has left an indelible mark on both the history of Timor-Leste and the hearts of all who were part of it.

Twenty-five years ago, in response to the urgent call for peace and stability, INTERFET—an international force composed of brave men and women from across the globe—stepped forward to support the people of Timor-Leste.

Their mission was not just a military operation but a profound expression of solidarity and a commitment to human rights and justice.

To the 16,000 veterans and members of INTERFET who are with us today, and to those who are not: Lance Corporal Russell Eisenhuth; Corporal Stuart Jones and Private Ashley Baker, we extend our deepest gratitude.

Your courage and dedication in 1999 were instrumental in navigating a critical period in Timor-Leste's journey towards independence.

Your sacrifice and perseverance have not been forgotten, and this anniversary is a testament to the enduring impact of your service.

Timor-Leste has come a long way since those early days. The resilience and strength of the Timorese people have transformed a land that once faced great adversity into a thriving nation.

This progress is a tribute to the collective effort of INTERFET and the enduring partnership between Timor-Leste and the International Community.

As we commemorate this 25th anniversary, let us also reflect on the values that guided the mission: peace, justice, and international cooperation.

These principles continue to be as relevant today as they were a quarter-century ago. They remind us that our work is never done and that our shared commitment to these ideals must remain steadfast.

This anniversary is not only a time to honour the past but also an opportunity to renew our dedication to the ongoing journey of peace and nation building and support for Timor-Leste.

Let us celebrate the achievements of the past while looking forward with hope and determination to the future.

We also take this moment to acknowledge the families and communities who supported and endured alongside those who served.

Your strength and resilience have been a vital part of this story, and we honour your role in this shared history.

As we gather here, we are united not only by the purpose of this memorial but by a shared reverence for the values it represents.

We hope this site will soon bear witness to the enduring legacy of those who served under INTERFET, whose courage and dedication helped guide Timor-Leste towards a brighter future.

In the years following the arrival of INTERFET, we have seen a nation emerging from the shadows of conflict and embracing the promise of peace and self-determination.

This memorial will stand as a testament to the sacrifices made, the lives touched, and the unwavering spirit of a people who have shown remarkable resilience and strength.

Today's blessing is a moment of profound significance. It is an opportunity to instil this site with a sense of reverence and gratitude. We ask that the essence of this place be filled with peace and that it may serve as a source of inspiration and reflection for all who visit.

May this memorial be a beacon of hope, a reminder of the collective effort that transcended borders and differences to bring about a shared vision of peace.

May it honour the courage of those who came to Timor-Leste with the intention of restoring justice and supporting the Timorese people's right to a better future.

As we pray for blessings for this site, let us also renew our commitment to the values that brought us here: respect, unity, and a deep vow to the principles of peace and human dignity.

Let this memorial not only commemorate the past but also inspire future generations to continue the work of building a world where such values are upheld and cherished.

In the coming months, we will embark on a series of consultations with contributing countries to ensure that the design and development of the memorial reflect the diverse experiences and perspectives of all those who played a role in this historic mission.

These consultations will focus on several key areas:

Design Concept: We will seek to incorporate meaningful elements from each contributing nation, ensuring that the design of the memorial embodies the collective spirit and contributions of all involved. We invite suggestions on design features, symbols, and themes that resonate with the values and experiences of each country;

Process and Engagement: We are committed to an inclusive process that values the input of all stakeholders. The consultations will provide a platform for dialogue and collaboration, allowing us to address any concerns and integrate valuable feedback into the planning and execution phases;

Cultural Sensitivity: Given the significance of this memorial to the Timorese People and the International Community, we will work closely with cultural experts and representatives from each contributing country to ensure that the memorial is designed and constructed with the utmost respect for cultural and historical contexts.

We believe that this collaborative approach will not only enhance the significance of the memorial but also strengthen the bonds between the nations that came together to support Timor-Leste during a pivotal time in its history.

Our goal is to create a memorial that is not only a symbol of remembrance but also a celebration of international solidarity and shared values.

By working together, we can ensure that this memorial stands as a lasting tribute to the courage and dedication of all who contributed to the INTERFET mission.

We look forward to engaging with our partners and working together on this important endeavour.

I thank you in advance for your continued support and commitment to honouring the legacy of INTERFET and its remarkable contribution to peace and humanitarian efforts.

Let us proceed with a sense of humility and reverence, knowing that this memorial and museum will stand as a living tribute to the enduring bond between Timor-Leste and the international community—a bond forged in the fires of adversity and strengthened by our shared hopes for a peaceful future.

In closing, let us remember that the legacy of INTERFET is not only in the milestones achieved but also in the enduring bonds of friendship and cooperation that continue to shape our world.

As we look back on these 25 years, let us be inspired by the spirit of unity that defined the mission and commit ourselves to the ongoing work of building a just and peaceful world.

Thank you, and may this site be blessed with the light of hope and the spirit of unity.