



**INTERVENTION BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO
AT THE 48TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF SUPPORT AND
SOLIDARITY WITH THE SAHARAWI PEOPLE (EUCOCO)**

(Recorded in Dili, Timor-Leste)

29 November 2024

Lisbon, Portugal

Excellencies

Dear friends,

Although I am unable to be physically present at this Annual Conference held in Lisbon, I could not forgo the opportunity to send a message of support and solidarity to the Saharawi people.

Two years ago, in Berlin, I argued that the solution for Western Sahara lies within the framework of the international multilateral system.

The courage of the Saharawi people, in their pursuit of independence and freedom, is rooted in identity and nationalist values, but above all, it is grounded in a steadfast commitment to international law.

Western Sahara has been waiting for the realisation of its referendum since 1992, which means it has been waiting for 32 years. Yet, it has not been forgotten!

Countries in the international community that turn their backs on the Saharawi people are turning their backs on justice. They are turning their backs on the very values that the West itself proclaims: democracy, freedom, and human rights.

Dear friends,

In August this year the Timorese celebrated, with the presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the 25th anniversary of their independence referendum. A quarter of a century has passed since the people of Timor-Leste, under the aegis of the United Nations, exercised their vote for independence.

As many are aware, we were inspired by a similar aspiration for Western Sahara when, in the early 1990s, the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution establishing the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara.

The armed and clandestine resistance in Timor-Leste drew strength to persevere, motivated and guided by international principles. We believed that after Western Sahara, perhaps it would be the turn of Palestine and then Timor-Leste.

This year, in Dili, we celebrated that victory, but we also mourned the human sacrifices and the memories of our suffering. With sorrow, we remembered the suffering of other peoples who have yet to fulfil their destiny.

In Timor-Leste, we exercised our right to choose, despite an atmosphere of intimidation and violence, because we knew that postponement was not a solution. This understanding was informed by the prolonged delay of the referendum in Western Sahara.

The referendum was the solution that enabled Timor-Leste to decide its future and achieve peace and freedom for both our country and the region. Since then, we have contributed to a regional and international framework of peace, reconciliation, and good neighbourly relations.

Thus, my appeal is for the rule of international law to prevail. For the principles enshrined in the United Nations resolutions to be upheld, enabling self-determination through the free and genuine expression of the will of the people of Western Sahara.

I call on the international community to assume its responsibility in this global imperative for decolonisation, by fostering dialogue between the Polisario Front and Morocco to achieve a peaceful, negotiated solution that respects the rights of the Saharawi people.

I urge the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, to embrace this just cause, as the late Kofi Annan did for the Timorese cause.

Thank you very much.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão