



PRIME
MINISTER

**SPEECH BY
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PRIME MINISTER & EMINENT PERSON OF g7+**

**SAFEGUARDING PEACE IN TURBELENT TIMES: THE
GRAND VISION OF g7+**

6TH MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE g7+

Díli, Timor-Leste

11 April 2025

My Dear President of the Republic

Excellencies

President of the Parliament

**Minister of Planning and Economic Development of Sierra Leone and
Chairwoman of g7+**

Ministers and Representatives of the g7+ countries

Members of the National Parliament

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Members of the Academia, Private Sector and Civil Society

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to Dili, the home of the g7+.

Fifteen years ago, I stood on this very stage as the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, addressing the first gathering of the g7+. At the time, our group had yet to be formally recognised, and our membership was less than half of what it is today. South Sudan had not yet gained independence and Timor-Leste was still the youngest nation in the world. **Yet, despite our fragile circumstances, we came together with a bold vision — a vision of peace, resilience and the right of our countries to shape their own destinies.**

From the very beginning, I believed that this group had the potential to grow—not only in number but in influence. I insisted that we must continue to expand, institutionalise our efforts, and strengthen our ability to harmonise and align international assistance with our priorities, ensuring that it would serve the real needs of our people rather than being dictated by external agendas.

The g7+ was born out of shared struggles — from countries that had suffered war, instability and external interventions that often failed to bring lasting peace. We joined hands to improve the effectiveness of the global aid system, to share our lessons with each other, and to support one another in shaping a new development model — one that is guided by a vision of lasting peace and self-reliance.

Despite coming from different geographies, cultures and political systems, we were united by a common understanding: **the success of making, building and sustaining peace depends on our ability to take full ownership of our trajectory.**

One year after the first meeting, I travelled to Juba, South Sudan, for the second g7+ gathering — a "g7+ retreat." At that time, South Sudan had just gained independence. I saw in its people the same aspiration for prosperity that I had witnessed in Timor-

Leste after our long struggle. Their determination for a brighter future reaffirmed our collective mission: **to ensure that our countries are not treated as problems to be solved but as nations with the potential to lead their own transformation.**

We left Juba with great enthusiasm, determined to change the international aid system, which had long failed our nations. That same year, we endorsed the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, a framework that aimed to shift the power dynamics in international cooperation — giving conflict affected states control over their own peacebuilding and development processes. This was supposed to reshape the global narrative, ensuring that our countries were not merely recipients of aid but equal partners in their development.

The New Deal was a significant achievement, influencing the global development agenda and leading to the inclusion of a standalone goal on peace (SDG 16) in the 2030 Agenda. **However, despite this success, the behaviours of international institutions and donor countries did not change.** The aid architecture remained stuck in the same outdated models — managing fragility rather than helping countries overcome it.

As we gather 15 years later, the g7+ has grown into a stronger and more structured platform, with a formal charter and observer status at the United Nations. It has made a significant impact on the global policy discourse, earning recognition as an influential voice for conflict affected countries. Through peer learning and cooperation, it has fostered solidarity and knowledge-sharing among its members, strengthening our collective ability to navigate challenges. These achievements, along with many other milestones that the g7+ Secretariat will highlight today, are a testament to our unity, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the cause of this group. **I commend the dedication of all member states and the tireless efforts of the Secretariat, whose work has been instrumental in advancing our shared vision.**

However, as we gather today to review our progress, we must ask ourselves: Where do our countries stand? Has the international system evolved to better serve countries in fragile situations or are we still struggling with the same challenges? What should be the direction of our collective journey from here onward?

The unfortunate reality is that while the g7+ has become influential, the world is in turmoil and remains turbulent.

Conflicts have become more protracted and devastating. Inequality and political instability continue to fuel new crises. The climate emergency has become a threat to the survival of humanity, worsening hunger, displacement and resource scarcity. The very institutions that were meant to safeguard global peace have failed to meet these challenges. Instead of working towards a just and inclusive world, powerful nations continue to shape global policies based on their own strategic interests, while a good majority of countries in the global south remain sidelined.

Excellencies,
Dear friends,
Ladies and gentlemen,

In 2013, I undertook my second mission to South Sudan. Alongside meetings with the country's leaders, I visited the village of Malou, in the State of Jonglei, where the government of Timor-Leste had provided a small grant for the construction of a primary school. Once again, I was moved by the resilience and determination of the people, their unwavering resolve for peace and stability despite the hardships they had endured.

However, beneath this hope, I could sense political tension and an unspoken fear of looming crisis. I made a heartfelt plea to South Sudan's leaders to do everything in their power to prevent conflict from taking root. From Timor-Leste's own painful experience, I knew how difficult it is to rebuild peace once a nation falls into civil war. I warned them that if conflict erupted, it would take years, perhaps decades, to restore stability and the cost of human lives would be immense.

Tragically, just a few days after my visit, South Sudan plunged into conflict — a war that would drag on for years, leaving behind hundreds of thousands of deaths, mass displacement, hunger and deepening poverty.

I attended the second Ministerial retreat of the g7+ in Haiti in 2012, a country that has long suffered from political instability, natural disasters and economic hardship. During my visit, I witnessed the same desire in all parts of Haitian society — for peace, stability and the opportunity to rebuild this nation. Despite the challenges of governance, security crises and recurring humanitarian disasters, the resilience of the Haitian people remains unshaken. However, like many of our nations, Haiti has been left at the mercy of external interventions that have too often failed to address the root causes of its fragility. I urged its leaders to take charge of their own path forward, emphasising that national ownership and unity are the only way to break the cycle of instability.

I led a mission to Guinea Bissau in 2014 — a country that the international community had abandoned — to share our experiences on peace and democracy using the principles of the g7+. I carried the message of peace, advocating for stability and democracy. I repeated the same plea to the leaders to respect the will of the people and refrain from undemocratic means to gain power.

I also led g7+ missions to the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2014 and 2015 to help facilitate dialogue between warring factions, drawing from our own experiences of conflict resolution and reconciliation. I met with citizens, displaced communities and the leaders of opposing groups — all of whom shared a common aspiration: peace and stability in their country. **Their voices were clear; they longed for an end to the violence that had torn their nation apart.**

As a result of our efforts, the Bangui Forum was established — a platform that brought together all stakeholders in a renewed push for peace. This process led to an agreement that included key provisions such as disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation — essential steps towards ending the cycle of conflict.

To ensure that these commitments were implemented, we sought support from bilateral and multilateral donors. We knocked on the doors of the World Bank and other international institutions, making a strong plea for financial assistance to support this aid-orphaned yet resource-rich country and its people. But instead of action, we were met with bureaucratic delays and indifference. **Promises were made, yet tangible support remained elusive — a stark reminder of the failures of the aid system to respond when fragile states need it most.**

During our meeting in Kabul, Afghanistan in 2016, I brought with me the experiences of national dialogue and reconciliation that had been instrumental in stabilising other conflict-affected nations. In 2016, at the g7+ Ministerial Meeting, I shared these lessons with Afghanistan's leaders, emphasising that reconciliation and inclusive dialogue were the only path to sustainable peace.

Following the Ministerial Meeting, I held bilateral discussions with Afghan government officials, urging them to initiate a genuine national dialogue, one that included all factions and voices within Afghan society. We strongly advocated for an intra-Afghan dialogue, a process that would allow the country to take charge of its own peace efforts rather than relying on externally driven solutions. We also called on the international community to support this effort, warning that without a locally owned reconciliation process, Afghanistan's future would remain uncertain.

But our appeals fell on deaf ears. The international community remained firm in its own approach, unwilling to recognise that externally imposed solutions would not bring lasting peace. Instead of listening to the voices of the Afghan people who had suffered decades of war, instability and foreign interventions, global powers pursued their own interests, treating Afghanistan as a pawn in geopolitical games rather than a nation with the right to determine its own destiny.

After 20 years of the so-called "war on terrorism," Afghanistan was ultimately left to its own fate. The same international actors that had justified intervention in the name of stability walked away, leaving behind uncertainty, suffering and an unfinished struggle for peace. It was a painful reminder that when peace is dictated by external forces rather than shaped by the will of the people, it is destined to be short-lived.

I visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and was deeply struck by both the resilience of its people and the immense untapped potential of the nation. **This is a country rich in natural resources, a country that, if given the opportunity, could fuel the development of an entire region.** Its vast mineral wealth, fertile lands and strategic position should have made it a pillar of stability and prosperity in Africa.

Yet, instead of prosperity, the DRC has been plagued by conflict and exploitation. It is heartbreaking to see how this great nation has become a victim of global greed, where multinational corporations, external powers and vested interests thrive on its instability. Instead of fostering development, they extract wealth from the land while leaving destruction in their wake.

Today, the eastern region of the DRC remains engulfed in violence, a conflict not just rooted in internal issues but fueled by external actors and regional rivalries. The suffering of its people is not an accident, it is a consequence of deliberate exploitation and neglect by the international community.

While world leaders issue statements of condemnation, their words carry no action, no real commitment to ending the suffering of innocent people. The DRC, like so many of our nations, remains a stark example of how fragile states are left to stand for themselves while global powers prioritise their own interests over peace and stability. This is the bitter reality we must confront and it is why the g7+ must continue to fight for a world, where our countries are no longer pawns in the games of the powerful but architects of their own futures.

I have closely followed the paths of other g7+ member countries, witnessing both progress and ongoing struggles. I am pleased to see Somalia making strides toward self-reliance, gradually breaking free from the cycle of international dependency. The resilience of its people and the determination of its leadership to reclaim sovereignty over their development and security are commendable.

At the same time, I remain deeply concerned about Yemen, a nation caught in the crossfire of hegemonic rivalries. **What was once a land of great history and culture has become a battlefield for external interests, with its people bearing the brunt of war, hunger and displacement.** Yemen's suffering is a clear reminder of how conflict affected countries too often become arenas for geopolitical contests rather than recipients of genuine support for peace and stability.

How many more of our countries must suffer before the world listens?

We must now ask ourselves: Do we continue to wait for the world to change or do we take charge of our own future?

It is time to accept the painful truth: the global system led by powerful nations has failed us time and time again. **But as leaders, we must also recognise our own responsibility** and get our acts together. The fate of our countries does not lie in the hands of others, it lies in our own hands. We must remember to serve our people with patience, dedication and humility.

It is within this context that I firmly believe **the g7+ has gathered enough lessons and experiences** to take control of our own destiny. We can no longer afford to wait

for external solutions that often fail to address our realities. **Our greatest strength lies in the solidarity among our member states** — a unity built on shared struggles, resilience and the collective aspiration for peace and stability.

Therefore, I would like to propose **three key action points** as our collective roadmap to transcend rhetoric and create real lasting impact on the lives of our people:

First: Decades of conflict and war have left deep social, political and societal divisions in our countries. These divides are not just remnants of the past; they are the very cracks through which proxy wars seep in, turning our nations into battlegrounds for external interests. Unhealed wounds become the breeding ground for recurring conflicts, ensuring that the cycle of violence continues across generations. Unless we address these divisions and work towards genuine reconciliation, peace will remain fragile and instability will persist.

I therefore urge that we collectively step up our efforts to promote national dialogue and reconciliation as the only sustainable path to resolving conflicts. **Healing must take precedence over politics.** We, as members of the g7+, have the moral authority and firsthand experience to champion reconciliation — not as a foreign-imposed agenda but as an essential process led by those who have lived through war and understand its consequences.

We have the power to do this because our actions are driven by solidarity, not political or economic self-interest. We are not here to dictate solutions but to stand with one another as partners in peace.

I call upon the United Nations to recognise and support this mission. Together, let us propose to the UN Secretary-General to appoint a Special Envoy for the g7+ — an envoy who can work alongside us to advance reconciliation, mediate conflicts and help end wars where they persist.

This is not just a proposal; it is an urgent necessity to avoid being left behind. If the world truly desires peace, then it must invest in dialogue and reconciliation, rather than conflict management and containment. Let us take the lead in making this happen.

Second: Despite being labeled as "fragile," our countries hold immense wisdom and experience that can inspire meaningful reforms in statebuilding. Our struggles have made us experts in overcoming adversity and the lessons we have learned are invaluable.

I am pleased that the g7+ has taken the initiative to bring together practitioners from our member states to design a framework for peer learning. This framework, which was discussed in Abu Dhabi (and will be discussed as part of this meeting's agenda), has the potential to become our blueprint for shaping policies, strengthening institutions and guiding our advocacy work on the global stage. Instead of relying

solely on external models that do not reflect our realities, we can use our collective knowledge to propose solutions that work for us.

Now, more than ever, we must rely on our own wisdom to guide us forward. Let us embrace this opportunity to turn our shared experiences into a powerful force for change, shaping the future of peacebuilding, governance and sustainable development in our nations.

Third: the international community, whether traditional donors or emerging global powers, must see us as equal partners in shared prosperity and a bridge for a more peaceful world. They must move beyond viewing fragile states as perpetual aid recipients and instead invest in our resilience. A more stable g7+ means fewer crises, fewer wars and ultimately, reduced need for international aid. Instead of reacting to conflicts after they erupt, they should invest in preventing wars before they begin. The United Nations and multilateral institutions must also recognise our wisdom and incorporate our lived experiences into their policies. Fragile states are not just passive players in the international system; we have knowledge that can contribute to global peacebuilding efforts.

Fourth and last: I urge all g7+ member states to mobilise political capital and invest in strengthening our collective cause. **The g7+ was built on the foundation of solidarity, a principle that is often overlooked or even dismissed by traditional international relations experts.** Unlike the alliances formed out of political convenience or strategic competition, our unity is rooted in a shared struggle for peace, stability and self-determination.

We have the potential to safeguard peace in our countries, to resist external interference and to prevent our nations from once again becoming the battlegrounds of hegemonic rivalries. The world is increasingly divided into competing blocs but rather than being drawn into these power struggles, we have the opportunity to form something different — **a bloc for peace.**

We have already demonstrated that solidarity can transcend geography, politics and history. From Africa to the Pacific, from the Middle East to Asia and the Caribbean, the g7+ has united countries from diverse backgrounds under a single vision: that fragility is not a fate but a challenge that can be overcome.

If we strengthen our unity, we can reshape the global conversation on peacebuilding. Where others form blocs for war, we can stand as a bloc for peace. **Where global powers seek division, we can offer an example of cooperation beyond borders.** Where fragile states have historically been ignored or used for strategic gain, we can claim our rightful place as equal partners in shaping a just and peaceful world.

Let us seize this moment, not just for ourselves but for the generations to come. The g7+ can be a beacon of hope in a world increasingly defined by division. But to achieve this, we must commit, invest and act together.

Excellencies,
ladies and gentlemen,

The world is becoming increasingly fragmented, with global divisions deepening and conflicts among the powerful reshaping the geopolitical landscape. As history has shown us, when great powers clash, it is the most vulnerable who suffer the most. Once again, we see wars being fought, not just on battlefields, but through economic coercion, political interference and proxy conflicts, many of which are playing out in our own countries.

We are at a crossroads. **We can either stand as passive observers, left at the mercy of global forces beyond our control or we can rise together, united and determined, to safeguard our nations from the scars of war and poverty.**

The choice is ours.

We have in our hands the g7+ — a platform built on solidarity, resilience and the unwavering belief that peace is possible.

I truly hope that this meeting and the discussions we hold over the next two days, will result in a clear and decisive path forward — one that leads our nations towards lasting peace, stability and self-reliance.

I wish you all the very best in your endeavours. Let us make history together.

Obrigadu wa'in.
Thank you.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão