



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

**CLOSING REMARKS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO**

**2025 PRESIDENTIAL LECTURE SERIES:
HUN SEN'S LESSONS: FROM GENOCIDE AND POVERTY TO FREEDOM AND
PROSPERITY**

Dili, 9 May 2025

Your Excellency Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen

Your Excellency President Dr José Ramos-Horta

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to make closing remarks after such a significant lecture by His Excellency, Samdech Hun Sen.

First, I would like to thank His Excellency for being with us in Dili and for being such a great friend of our country.

I also thank you for sharing your reflections with such honesty and clarity. Your words have given us much to think about.

You have led your people through one of the most difficult and complex periods in modern history. From the devastation of war and genocide, you have unified and then rebuild a country.

We acknowledge your leadership of your country with great respect and we welcome you as an elder statesman of our region.

In Timor-Leste, we understand the long road of re-building. We also know that independence was not the end of our struggle — it was the beginning of the difficult work of peace-building and State-building.

That process continues today as we consolidate peace, build institutions, strengthen governance and work to deliver development.

We are a young country, but our journey has been shaped by many years of resistance. We have walked through sacrifice. But we have been carried forward by the courage and determination of those who came before us.

We have stood on the shoulders of giants. Leaders like Nicolau Lobato, and Nino Konis Santana; and the many thousands of Timorese martyrs who gave their lives for our freedom.

But we must also remember that we are not alone in this story. The Cold War brought great turmoil to our region. Our country was invaded with the support of the West who were driven by the fear of communism. And just as Timor-Leste was caught in that wider struggle, so too was Cambodia.

Your Excellency, your people have endured tremendous suffering.

Cambodia was bombed heavily during the Vietnam War. The destruction gave rise to a period of radicalisation that destroyed lives and institutions on a massive scale. The very foundations of your State were dismantled and over three million people died

You became a resistance leader that fought to restore order and unify your country. You led your people out of the wilderness; and you re-built a nation from the ground up.

You should be proud of the story that you have told us today – about how you used peaceful methods to bring about peace and national reconciliation following a period of tragedy, division and genocide.

Over time, you consolidated peace, built the capacity of State institutions, strengthened good governance, built national infrastructure and developed a strong economy. This was not easy. It required steady leadership, a consistent focus on reconciliation and the promotion of a ‘culture of dialogue.’

Importantly, you achieved this progress by insisting on national ownership of your country’s destiny.

Cambodia’s journey over the past four decades is a powerful example of how a country can recover from devastation. Today, Cambodia is not only a successful State — it is active in regional and international affairs.

At a time of growing disorder in the world, Cambodia contributes to global discussions with clarity and a sense of purpose. And it supports others, including Timor-Leste, through practical cooperation, including in agriculture, education and tourism.

Here in Timor-Leste, we are still consolidating our institutions. In many ways, we remain a fragile country. But we have been a successful model of reconciliation, we have consolidated peace and we are building an inclusive State.

This is why we helped to establish the g7+, a group of countries affected by conflict and fragility that have come together to speak with a shared voice.

The g7+ was founded on the belief that fragile states are not failed states. They are countries with great potential that deserve the opportunity to grow in their own way.

Timor-Leste has taken an active role in this group from the beginning. We have worked with others to make sure that development is not imposed from the outside but is locally led and grounded in national dialogue and ownership.

On my last visit to Phnom Penh in May 2023, Your Excellency kindly recommended that I visit the Museum of the History of the Kingdom of Cambodia. I was very impressed by the Museum. The part that had the greatest impact on me was the history of building peace through dialogue and reconciliation. This message is not only important for Cambodia — it is also meaningful for other nations, especially fragile countries.

After the visit, I informed Your Excellency that the story told by this remarkable Archive could give guidance and reflection for g7+ member States. With your support, the g7+ Secretariat was able to visit the Archive and collect images and information so that we could share this story with all g7+ countries. It is an important story for all of us - and it should be shared.

Your Excellency, your approach has reflected these same principles. You have shown that national development must be guided by local priorities, taking into account history, culture and context. Cambodia's experience offers lessons for all of us.

Your Excellency,

Your visit comes at a time when Timor-Leste is preparing to take an important step — to join ASEAN as a full member.

This is not simply a foreign policy goal. It reflects our identity, our direction and our belief that our future lies in the region we belong to.

We are very grateful for Cambodia's consistent support. We know that Cambodia, as the most recent member to join ASEAN, understands the challenges of integration. We deeply value your strong advocacy for Timor-Leste's accession.

We have made real progress. Our accession to the World Trade Organization is helping us implement important reforms and demonstrates our commitment to support regional and international integration.

We believe we are ready to join ASEAN and contribute to peace, cooperation and prosperity in our region. And our people will not forget your support for our country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our country has faced great struggle and sacrifice to achieve self-determination and development.

But the Timorese are not alone in having experienced hardship. Around our region, many peoples have faced war, displacement and loss.

And we recognise those leaders who have carried the weight of history, who have shown courage and vision, and who have helped their countries move from conflict to peace — and from fragility to strength.

Your Excellency, you are one of those leaders. You are the father of peace in your country. We are honoured that you have shared your journey with us. And to the young people here today — to the students and future leaders of our country — I encourage you to reflect deeply on what you have heard.

Leadership is not about perfect solutions or immediate results. It is about listening and engaging in dialogue, it is about knowing that change takes time - and that progress is built over years, not days.

Your time will come soon, and when it does, you will not be alone. You will carry with you the experience and example of those who came before.

Stand on their shoulders. Learn from their lessons. And use that knowledge to build peace, to serve the people and to help carry our country forward.

Your Excellency, thank you for your leadership and your solidarity. Thank you for reminding us that even the most difficult histories can lead to hope and a better future. And thank you for being a true friend of our country.

Saum arkoun.

Thank you.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão