



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

**ADDRESS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
OPENING SESSION OF THE XV PALOP-TL – EU MINISTERIAL
MEETING**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Dili
6 June 2025



Your Excellencies

Vice Prime Minister, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Digital Economy of Cabo Verde,

Minister for Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs of Mozambique,

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Communities of São Tomé and Príncipe,

Secretary of State for the Budget and Fiscal Affairs of Guinea-Bissau,

Secretary of State for Planning of Angola,

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste,

Ambassador of the European Union to Cape Verde,

Managing Director for Africa within the European External Action Service,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great satisfaction that I address you at the opening session of the XV Ministerial Meeting of the PALOP-TL – EU Group.

We are proud to welcome to our country our brothers and sisters from the African Portuguese-speaking Countries, and to join with the European Union — a key development partner — in celebrating our shared commitment to cooperation and development.

For over thirty years, the European Union has played an important role in supporting development in our countries and strengthening South-South cooperation.

Timor-Leste joined the PALOP Group in 2007, five years after the restoration of our independence. This year, on 20 May, we celebrated our 23rd anniversary.

The year 2025 is also a special one for Mozambique, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe and Angola, as it marks the 50th anniversary of your independence. Likewise, Timor-Leste commemorates the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of its independence, though we were forced to fight, with great sacrifice, for over two decades before that independence became a lived reality.

Since then, we have been steadily building our State and Nation — proudly free and committed to national development.

We are proud of all we have achieved so far, of living in a society governed by the values of peace and democracy, while fully aware of our fragilities and the challenges we still face.

Fortunately, in this new struggle for development, we have received the support, friendship and cooperation of partners from across the world. Here I must highlight our fellow Portuguese-speaking nations, who share not only our language, but also our sentiment.

Strengthening our partnership is therefore essential to achieving sustainable and inclusive development across our countries.

We share a unique history and heritage, expressed not only through the Portuguese language, culture and gastronomy but also through the fundamental principles and values that guide our States.

The bonds that unite us allow us to better understand one another's realities, and to work together so that our cooperation may have a meaningful impact on our institutions and our people.

With the support of the European Union, the proximity and shared understanding between us offers a unique opportunity to exchange knowledge and experience in areas of common interest — and to take the lead in our own development.

Our presence in two important regional centres, Africa and Asia, allows us to enrich our partnership, and places us in a privileged position to build strategic bridges between our countries and the economic blocs to which we belong.

Timor-Leste's accession to the World Trade Organisation last year and our integration into ASEAN as the 11th member state at the next summit, scheduled for October this year, are new opportunities to strengthen diplomatic, commercial and economic relations between our countries and the member states of this organisation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In today's uncertain and turbulent world, solidarity and cooperation are fundamental to preserving the pillars that support our collective existence.

The universal values that have underpinned human life over recent decades are now being tested daily — by violent conflicts that take innocent lives, by climate change that threatens the survival of the most vulnerable nations, and increasingly, by the disruptive effects of digital transformation.

The global political context confronts us with challenges that require responses guided by the promotion of peace and stability.

In our own countries, we know well that without peace and stability, we cannot ensure inclusive and sustainable social and economic development.

Isolation and conflict are not lasting solutions to any problem. On the contrary, only dialogue and cooperation can preserve stability, peace and security, protect the biodiversity and ecosystems that sustain life on our planet and address the deep inequalities that still afflict humanity.

The impact of climate change is a clear symptom of this inequality and proof that only collective effort can resolve a crisis caused by a few, the most powerful, the richest, but felt most acutely by the most vulnerable and least developed countries.

And it is the countries of Africa that have for decades, suffered most from the complex challenges of instability, conflict, food insecurity and forced displacement — challenges now further exacerbated by environmental degradation and climate change.

What is needed is an urgent collective international response that promotes peace, stability, climate resilience and adaptation, to restore hope and dignity to our African brothers and sisters!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The areas of cooperation between the PALOP-TL and the EU will be discussed today in the panel sessions included in the agenda.

I am pleased that the promotion of the rule of law, improvements in financial and economic governance, and the creation of employment in the cultural sector have been defined as strategic priorities for cooperation during the 2021-2027 period.

These objectives are aligned with our national development strategy and with the current priorities of our government. In Timor-Leste, we are working to consolidate State institutions, including undertaking a reform of the justice sector, and we are committed to ensuring transparency and efficiency in public financial management.

Without these foundations, and without a commitment to the high-quality training of human resources, our efforts to diversify the economy, expand the private sector and generate employment will struggle to succeed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Timor-Leste, I affirm our commitment to work diligently throughout the presidency we now have the honour of assuming, to ensure the effective implementation of cooperation programmes in the interest of the development of our countries and the well-being of our citizens.

We count on the support of all of you — our African sisters and brothers, the European Union and our implementing partners — to help ensure the success of this mission.

On a final note, allow me to convey my satisfaction at the election of Cape Verde and Timor-Leste as Vice-Presidents of the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, under the motto 'Better Together', presented by the President-elect. I wish that, together with the President and the other elected Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, they can contribute to the reforms and decisions necessary for a world where we can all live in the peace, security and harmony that are essential for the sustainable development of humanity and the planet.

Before I finish, allow me to extend an invitation.

We are united by a shared language but also by a vast ocean. It was across that ocean that we built our common history and it is the ocean that sustains our lives today.

Timor-Leste has identified the protection of the ocean and marine biodiversity as one of our top national priorities. We are developing a Blue Economy Policy and Action Plan, through which we aim to promote the

growth of diverse economic sectors, in harmony with the sustainable and balanced use of marine resources, grounded in scientific knowledge and ensuring their protection for future generations.

For this reason, since 1 June we have been celebrating Ocean Week, with initiatives to raise awareness of the ocean and the urgent need for its preservation. Without understanding the role the ocean plays in our lives, we cannot hope to mobilise people to protect it.

It is therefore my pleasure to invite you to the Ocean Parade — a moment of community and celebration of the ocean — which will take place tomorrow morning, departing at 8:00 a.m. from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and ending at Dili port.

It is an honour to have you here in Timor-Leste. I hope that, in addition to your important work agenda, you will also have the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of my country and the warmth of our people.

I conclude by wishing you all a productive meeting and a safe journey home.

Thank you.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão