



**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
Timor-Leste OceanX Symposium: Science for a Blue Future**

“From Science to Action: Applying the Findings of the 2025 OceanX Timor-Leste Mission to Timor-Leste’s Blue Economy and Ocean Priorities”

**Dili Convention Centre
28 August 2026**



Palácio do Governo
Avenida Marginal
Dili, Timor-Leste

Excellencies,
Members of Government
Members of the Diplomatic Corps and Development Partners

Mr Vincent Pieribone, CEO of OceanX

NGOs, Academia and Private Sector

Dear OceanX Scientists, Technical Experts and Staff
Dear Students and Faculty members
Ladies and gentlemen

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Government and the people of Timor-Leste, it is with great honour and pleasure that I welcome the OceanX Mission team to our country. Your presence here is, in itself, a sign of confidence in Timor-Leste's potential and in the value of what our sea has to offer the world.

For those who are not familiar with OceanX, the organisation is globally recognised for exploring the wonders of the ocean using cutting-edge technology. By sharing the knowledge gained through its work and bringing the public closer to the sea, OceanX inspires us to build a “blue future” — a future in which protecting the ocean is understood, above all, as protecting life on our planet.

The Government of Timor-Leste is deeply committed to this endeavour.

This Symposium, co-organised by the Government of Timor-Leste and OceanX, is precisely an expression of that commitment: to translate science into action, transform knowledge into policy, and ensure that discoveries about our ocean make a tangible contribution to the sustainable development of our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Timorese people fought for decades for their freedom. When we finally achieved independence, it became clear that our freedom could not end at the shoreline. The struggle to delimit our maritime boundaries is therefore inseparable from our struggle for sovereignty: the same people, the same determination, the same right to benefit fully — economically, socially, culturally and environmentally — from what is ours.

Today, therefore, we look to our sea with renewed ambition.

We may be a country with a small land area. But when we look to the sea, we are a vast nation. Not only because of its beauty, nor simply because it is a central element of our culture and identity, but because of its immense potential.

Timor-Leste lies at the heart of the Coral Triangle, one of the richest regions for marine life anywhere on the planet. Our seas offer unique conditions for observing whales, dolphins and other large marine animals relatively close to shore. Our coral reefs, in turn, provide shelter and nursery grounds for fish, invertebrates, sea turtles and dugongs.

This oasis of biodiversity is a true treasure of our planet. But this privilege also brings with it a great responsibility. We have a duty to protect, to care for and, above all, to act.

To act against global threats that are becoming increasingly real: from climate change, which is warming our waters and raising sea levels; to pollution, which suffocates marine life; and to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, which takes from the sea more than it can replenish.

This damage can be irreversible. And Timor-Leste cannot confront these threats alone. Protecting the ocean requires unity, responsibility and cooperation — both regional and international.

It was also for this reason that the Government of Timor-Leste invited OceanX to undertake a mission in our country last November. The mission collected new data on marine mapping, biodiversity and ecosystems — data that will help us better fulfil our responsibilities and achieve the objectives of our Blue Economy Policy.

Our journey begins with a simple step: understanding our potential.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

Our vision for the Blue Economy is aligned with the Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030, with our strategic cooperation within ASEAN and in the Pacific region, and with the values and objectives we share within the CPLP.

It rests on clear pillars, one of which is marine scientific research, combined with the traditional knowledge and practices of our communities, as well as the development of a true “blue generation” through ocean-focused education.

Timor-Leste intends to establish a network of international scientific and technological partnerships and to conduct its first Marine Biodiversity Survey and Study, involving young people and local communities and building their capacity.

This initiative will be linked to other strategic objectives, such as the establishment of Marine Research and Education Centres; National Maritime Spatial Planning and Management; the establishment of a network of Marine Protected Areas; and the creation of Ataúro National Park.

However, these conservation initiatives do not mean leaving our marine resources untouched. We must use our marine resources wisely to create jobs, income and new opportunities for our people.

Food security, economic development and social well-being are essential to the lives and livelihoods of our people. We want to create opportunities in marine conservation and management, but also in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, marine tourism, renewable energy and other activities that generate decent employment for our people, without compromising the health of the ocean on which we all depend.

We want to act, but to act responsibly, through a model in which economic development and environmental protection can and must reinforce one another.

That is what our Blue Economy Policy is about. That is what this Symposium is about.

I thank OceanX for its support to Timor-Leste and for sharing its scientific knowledge and discoveries with us today.

I hope that this Symposium will inspire other scientists and scientific organisations, as well as universities, civil society, the private sector and our communities, to work together — with determination and vision.

I hope that today’s discussions will translate into tangible results for our people, for our sea and for a blue future for all.

Thank you very much.
Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão