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MESSAGE FROM PRIME MINISTER XANANA GUSMÃO

Timor-Leste: Nation with a vision

Fifteen years after choosing independence, Asia's youngest nation now sets its course for the next 15 years to prosperity

FIFTEEN years ago on 30 August, 1999, the people of East Timor voted to form our nation, and to take destiny into our own hands. It was the culmination of 24 years of struggle against an illegal occupation which had followed 400 years of colonial rule. We were the last among the South-east Asian nations to break from colonialism.

Today, we call ourselves Timor-Leste: not just the eastern half of the island of Timor, but a country and nation in our own right, with our distinct identity, qualities, vision and dreams. We have not come this far without help. During our long independence struggle, we were buttressed by the solidarity of friends all over the world who recognised our right to liberty.

In the years following the 1999 independence referendum, we have benefited from the support of the international community as we built our nation's institutional foundations and capacity. We will never forget this solidarity, for which Timor-Leste is deeply grateful.

Over the last decade and a half, Timor-Leste has come a long way from the ashes from which we arose. We have a stable government, elected through a transparent, democratic process, and our institutions of democracy are strong.

The work of nation-building and economic development are well underway, and we have formed strong friendships and alliances with our regional neighbours through proactive engagement. No vital country exists in isolation, and the inexorable march of history forces us all to adapt and renew or become obsolete.

We are conscious of our own vulnerabilities as well as those of our neighbours. We are committed to supporting our neighbours as they strengthen and solidify their positive processes, and we hope our friends will afford Timor-Leste patience and understanding as they recall their own nation-building journey.

Today, we have a strong and warm relationship with Indonesia, as well as with Portugal, Australia, the United States, China, Japan, Korea and all the countries of Asean and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP).

It is indeed a great privilege to acknowl-

edge the friendship and generous support Timor-Leste has received from all the members of the United Nations. Having endured a long separation from the community of nations, we are committed to being an active member of this global community, both to contribute from our experience and abilities, as well as to learn from those who have gone before us.

Timor-Leste and Singapore

To Singapore, here, we would like to express our special appreciation. Singapore recognised that the occupation of Timor-Leste was illegal and wrong when this was not a popular position to take in its day, and when you were yet a young nation yourself, working hard to carve out your place in the world.

From the beginning of Timor-Leste's independence, Singapore has sent its best and ablest to assist our country, and has extended concrete help in a multitude of areas including security and policing, counter-corruption training, education, health and economic development.

Your young people and your compassion have come to Timor-Leste to work with the needy, to help in our schools and villages, and to participate in our international sporting events. Throughout it all, your professionalism, integrity and generosity have shone through.

Singapore has long been a great source of inspiration to Timor-Leste. We have seen how Singapore has transformed itself from a small island with almost no natural resources to a global leader and economic force. You are a constant reminder and encouragement to Timor-Leste of what can be achieved with vision, national unity and political will.

Strategic Development Plan

In 2010, Timor-Leste outlined a 20-year programme to develop our nation, called the Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 (SDP).



Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão with the children of Timor-Leste.



PHOTO: JOÃO GALAMBA



Top: Palacio do Governo, Dili, the main government building which houses the office of the Prime Minister and other officials. Above: University students enjoying free Wi-Fi at Dili's seaside park, Largo de Lecidere. PHOTO: CEDRIC ARNOLD / REALFEATURES.COM

to modern specifications and will further open up the country to commerce and trade.

The capacity of Presidente Nicolau Lobato International Airport in our capital, Dili, will be upgraded to handle one million travellers per year.

By 2020, all of Timor-Leste will have access to reliable and affordable high-speed Internet, enabling our citizens to acquire information and education, to participate in the global dialogue, and to reach the international market.

Special Economic Zones

To fast track economic development, we have set up special economic zones to accelerate the strategic development of areas which will precipitate a multiplier effect across our country and region.

One such pilot project is the Special Zone of Social Market Economy (SZSME) located in Oecusse Ambeno, Timor-Leste's western enclave.

The Oecusse Ambeno SZSME will be funded by public and private investment, and will activate the development of transport, industrial and agricultural infrastructure, creating a marketplace of 30 million people across the currently under-served region stretching across eastern Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

The Tasi Mane ("Male Sea") Project along our country's south coast will form the backbone of Timor-Leste's petroleum industry.

The construction of a new shipping port and airports, roads and other infrastructure will open up the entire southern hinterland of the country to sectors beyond oil and gas to include animal husbandry, forestry, horticulture and manufacturing.

We are looking beyond the limits of our own borders to seek synergies with our neighbours, including Australia and Indonesia, with the view that together we can form greater critical mass, better economies of scale, and become a more attractive market. As a region, we can rise better and faster together than alone.

In all of these ventures, it is our priority to adhere to principles of best business practices, transparency, accountability and equity.

Eye on the future

As we look to the future, we are mindful that the elder generation of independence fighters must eventually make way for the next generation of leaders of our country.

It is incumbent upon us to ensure an orderly transition, and to prepare and equip those who will receive the baton to continue to run the race with dedication, integrity and a focused vision for the good of the future of Timor-Leste.

We welcome you to explore the rich beauty and abundant opportunities in our country, and to be embraced by the warmth of our people. Viva Timor-Leste!



Timor-Leste chairs international organisation of Lusophone countries

In July this year, Timor-Leste hosted the 10th Conference of the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP). Lusophone countries are home to some 240 million people across four continents: Europe, South America, Asia and Africa. Many of the member states, including Timor-Leste, are rich in oil and gas and mineral resources.

Leaders from the nine member states of CPLP (below), six Associate Observer countries, and representatives from Asean including Singapore, Indonesia and Myanmar gathered in the Timorese capital, Dili, to discuss strategies for economic and business cooperation.

President Taur Matan Ruak of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste was elected to chair the multilateral organisation for the next two years, with Timor-Leste leading all CPLP ministerial and working group meetings during the term.



Singapore Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Masagos Zulkifli (left) and Timor-Leste Foreign Minister José Luis Guterres at the CPLP Summit 2014 in Dili, Timor-Leste.

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9 CPLP Member States

- Angola
- Brazil
- Cape Verde
- Equatorial Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Mozambique
- Portugal
- São Tomé and Príncipe
- Timor-Leste

6 Associate Observers

- Georgia
- Japan
- Mauritius
- Namibia
- Senegal
- Turkey



Timor-Leste Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão at far left and Timor-Leste President Taur Matan Ruak at centre.



Capital city, Dili.