



**Permanent Mission of the
Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste to the United Nations**

Statement by

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**Mr. President,
Secretary-General,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Let me start by expressing my sincere congratulations on your assumption of the Presidency of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly.

The year 2009 marks important milestones for Timor-Leste. Ten years ago, the UN sponsored the Popular Consultation held in my country, marking the transition to full independence. Seven years ago, we attained full sovereignty with the restoration of our independence and began, for the first time in the history of our nation, the challenging process of nation-building.

We have been assisted by successive UN missions, which began by exercising also, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, full administrative powers in Timor-Leste.

This process has been undertaken for a very limited number of times in this new millennium. Naturally, failures and successes in decisions taken and policies adopted are always present and form part of our collective challenge on the nation building road, and this is true for both established and newly established states.

Timor-Leste has been showcased both as a success story of the United Nations and has been hastily characterized by some as a failed state.

I stand here before you, not to argue on behalf of one view or another, much less to duel on the past. I am here to describe to you what is Timor-Leste today, what we have been able to do, our modest achievements and remaining challenges, but most importantly, how we as a new and small nation-state, situate ourselves in the community of nations.

We also want to be part of the solutions to the unprecedented challenges facing human kind in this new millennium. Today we talk about global problems, that need global and concerted collective responsibility, and Timor-Leste is ready to assume part of that responsibility.

Let me stress however, that I am also able to be here today because it was through the United Nations, that a solution was found for what was then tabled as the "question of East Timor" and it was the United Nations that shouldered the responsibility of finding a just solution to that question and was indeed able to do so with success.

The decision to engage with the United Nations was a wise one, taken by the then leaders of the resistance, who are today our elder statesmen, our esteemed President of the Republic, H.E José Ramos-Horta and the Prime Minister, H.E. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão.

The underlining policy to resolve conflict through peaceful means and defer to the United Nations Charter to enable the exercise of the universal right to self determination is a fundamental principle embraced by the new generation of Timorese leaders. The engagement with the United Nations continues to be the policy of Timor-Leste today.

Timor-Leste has benefited greatly from this engagement, through the dedicated work of successive UN missions and through the presence and work of the various United Nations Agencies, Funds and Programs. The UN's administrative role in Timor-Leste under the capable leadership of our dear friend, the late Sergio Vieira de Mello was without precedence. Could the UN have done things differently in those earlier and subsequent years and how can we best use this partnership to move forward?

With hindsight, without a doubt, and this can perhaps be the most invaluable contribution of Timor-Leste to lessons learned and how to apply those lessons for the future in our country, for the United Nations on Peace Keeping and Peace Building. One of the most important lessons is that it takes time to build national capacities and sustainable institutions.

Young nations like ours, have to weigh up and balance many priorities. From pressing socio-economic requirements, including provision of basic social services, to building the institutions of state and develop capacities. We have to balance justice with peace and reconciliation. This involves prioritizing many urgent demands and sequencing actions. There is no quick fix and short term solutions.

Timor-Leste has been the subject of numerous evaluations and studies including that of the UN's work, up to a staggering three thousand, I believe. In terms of our contribution to the lessons learned for the UN, I have proposed that Timor-Leste should itself conduct an evaluation of all that has been done in the country by the international community, with a view to informing a country based perspective, as the recipient of what has been done, and how the benefits of these actions, or otherwise, have been experienced and felt in the country by the Timorese themselves.

The UN's current mission in Timor-Leste, UNMIT, is testament to the need for a longer term engagement by the UN. The crisis of 2006 in Timor-Leste was an unfortunate reminder of the fragility of peace when the institutions of state are still weak and the capacities still need to be strengthened, and we can't meet all of the competing socio, economic and political needs.

The cost of resolving a regress to violence in 2006 has been high for the international community, including the UN, our development partners, as well as the Timorese government itself. UNMIT's mandate to help reconstruct our security forces and provide support for our justice system is central and is still needed for ensuring long term peace and stability in our country.

The government of Timor-Leste has continued to make significant achievements, although we still face challenges. Some of the main problems from the 2006 crisis have been resolved. The IDPs have been peacefully reintegrated into their communities, the security forces are being reconstituted, although they still require capacity building and strengthening, and gang violence has been stopped. Our institutions of state are fully functioning and our government can now increase its concentration on development.

Mr. President,

I wish to emphasize the importance that we continue to place on relations with Indonesia, where we have taken a pragmatic approach and base our relations on reconciliation and the principle of looking forward. We cannot deny, or undo, what has happened in our common past, but we are determined to reconcile that past, because we know we can progress and do much for the future.

I am part of the new generation of leaders in Timor-Leste, and we and I personally, have not been spared the grief and loss experienced by most of Timor-Leste's population. But I know that my responsibility is to prevent what happened in Timor-Leste in the past, from ever, happening again.

Timor-Leste and Indonesia are both countries in transition and we should be allowed "to search for our own path" as President Obama has said in his own speech, conscious that "our path, may not be perfect".

This is a complex process that requires a Timorese solution. I am sure that other countries that have been in conflict, would appreciate long term support from the international community to tackle the same problems that we are facing.

Timor-Leste has not, by any means, turned its back on justice. Our Constitution enshrines the rule of law in our country and the government's policy is to fully strengthen the justice system. We are being aided in this by the international community and fully realize that we will continue to need the assistance of the international community in the years to come.

Our government has been severely criticized both internationally and nationally, on the position we have adopted and some decisions that have been taken. However, these decisions have been taken with the conviction that we need to reconcile with our past and ensure peace for our current and future generations, and we stand by these decisions.

Mr. President,

Timor-Leste today has its own set of challenges which may appear removed from emerging challenges facing human kind and placed before this forum. Timor-Leste continues to be concerned with alleviating and reducing poverty, as well as high unemployment, addressing the needs of the rural populations, establishing and consolidating the institutions of state, so that they can better respond to the needs of all of our people. But it does not mean that Timor-Leste has its head hidden in the sand, and is not aware of other challenges. It will require time for our young Nation to address and overcome all of these challenges.

As part of the community of nations and human kind, Timor-Leste is also concerned by all that threatens life on this planet and is moved to comment. In effect, Timor-Leste has expressed its position on a number of important issues as a member of the United Nations including in the General Assembly, and wishes to reiterate its opposition to the economic sanctions imposed against Cuba by the United States and we reaffirm our support for the General Assembly resolutions of the past 17 years, for the US to lift these sanctions.

It is not Timor-Leste's intention to develop nuclear capacity or become a nuclear power, and therefore we have ratified the non-proliferation treaty and we council caution in the development of and use of nuclear capacity.

With reference to climate change, although an island state, Timor-Leste is fortunate not to be immediately threatened by rising sea waters, nor is it responsible for large carbon emissions. But it is affected by changing weather patterns and is following the climate change debate. At the national level, we are naturally concerned with preservation of our environment and place importance in reforestation and protection of the environment.

With regards to the financial economic crisis Timor-Leste has been fortunate to have experienced only partial impact. However, we are also concerned with the causes of the crisis and looking to learn the lessons to avoid, in building our financial systems and institutions. In this light we support the outcomes of the recent meeting of the G20 in Pittsburg to take preventive measures for the future.

To conclude, Mr. President,

Allow me to express gratitude, on behalf of my government, to the United Nations and our international partners for your continued support to Timor-Leste. We stand resolutely with you in contributing to solutions to our collective challenges and are resolved to solving our own national challenges.

I thank you.