



**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
IX Constitutional Government**

**STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY MR. BENDITO DOS SANTOS FREITAS
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION**

**ON THE OCCASION OF
THE 80TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

**Delivered by HE Ambassador Dionisio Babo Soares
Permanent Representative to the United Nations**

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Your Excellency Annalena Baerbock, President of the General Assembly,

On behalf of the Government and people of Timor-Leste, I extend warm congratulations to Your Excellency on your well-deserved election as President of the eightieth session of the United Nations General Assembly. It is an important step in correcting the historical gender unbalance in the leadership of this organization. We also thank your predecessor, Philémon Yang, for the way in which he conducted our work in the previous session

We also pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, for his steadfast leadership in these turbulent times and, above all, for his clear and unique voice in defence of peace.

Excellencies,

It is a great honour to address this Assembly on behalf of Timor-Leste. Our relationship with the United Nations is historic and decisive. For our country, which joined the United Nations family in 2002 following a long struggle for self-determination, the eightieth anniversary of the Organization is a moment for reflection on the transformative power of multilateralism.

Though still young and facing the challenges that followed its difficult history, Timor-Leste today stands as a vibrant democratic State, an indisputable symbol of the triumph of the international system.

Through the United Nations, we restored our right to independence and laid the foundations for the building of State institutions. Today, this family of nations continues to support us in our sovereign process of development and growth.

It is also with the United Nations that we will continue, in the international sphere, to pursue the paths of peace, freedom, equality among peoples, and the right to self-determination, in every corner of the world, without exception.

At a time when the world seems to be willingly walking towards self-destruction, marked by international and civil conflicts, humanitarian emergencies, the climate catastrophe, and the resulting deepening of

inequalities, Timor-Leste reaffirms our firm conviction that the multilateral system is not a choice, but a necessity.

The United Nations emerged 80 years ago as a response to the dangers of isolationism and unilateral interventionism, grounded in the principles of dialogue and the search for collective solutions as instruments for peace, security, and the defence of human rights. The spirit of peace and unity that built this House must be renewed and strengthened in the face of the thousands of victims of today's violence.

We all must uphold international law. For small countries like mine, it is the only guarantee of justice, sovereignty, and national independence. It was international law that enabled us to secure sovereignty over our resources following the conciliation process with Australia. It is this system that allowed us to request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in relation to climate change. This historic opinion determined that the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is inherent to the enjoyment of human rights.

The United Nations continues to play a central role in protecting peoples, responding to humanitarian crises and mediating conflicts. Rejecting the isolation of States and unilateralism, Timor-Leste calls for this 80th General Assembly to be a turning point in relation to current conflicts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Deeply concerned by the erosion of international humanitarian law and the suffering of civilians in ongoing conflicts, Timor-Leste calls on all States to renew their commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, to respect international law, and to strengthen the role of the United Nations in conflict prevention.

Peace and security remain the cornerstone of the Charter of the United Nations. We believe, however, that the UN cannot and must not delay in implementing the urgent reforms that we have all called for, first and foremost,

to ensure its effectiveness in defending and guaranteeing human rights and international law, which are being violated before our very eyes in many parts of the world.

The urgency of UN reform lies in addressing the structural impediments that prevent it from fulfilling its most basic mission – to protect lives.

To strengthen the global architecture for peace, Timor-Leste proposes that the General Assembly be given greater power and authority in security matters, to prevent a single Member State from paralysing the entire collective security system of the United Nations.

We also underline the importance of reforming the Security Council so that it reflects the vitality and reality of the twenty-first century and gives voice to developing and smaller States. We remain firmly convinced that an expansion of both permanent and non-permanent membership is necessary to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities. It is the right and duty of our nations to aspire to a Security Council that is more accountable, representative, transparent, relevant and, above all, effective.

Excellencies,

Our commitment to peace is reflected in the way we relate to the world. Through political-diplomatic coordination and multilateral cooperation within the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, Timor-Leste joins the collective effort to promote harmony, solidarity and inclusion, contributing to global and regional challenges.

As a member of the g7+, Timor-Leste has brought its own experience of post-conflict stability to influence the global agenda for peace and sustainable development, inspiring coordinated action and diplomacy based on sharing and exchange, with the aim of transforming fragility into resilience. At the 6th Ministerial Meeting of the g7+, held in April 2025 in Dili, Timor-Leste and fellow conflict-affected countries renewed their commitment to peacebuilding, resilience and sustainable development.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and fulfilling the 2030 Agenda must be a priority for all. We are, however, concerned that many of the targets to which we have committed ourselves remain far from being achieved.

Timor-Leste formally acceded to the World Trade Organization in 2024, and after a committed path towards fulfilling all eligibility criteria, will, on 26 October, become a full member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations – another milestone in our nation-building journey. This is a moment of great significance for national economic development, regional integration and international recognition, and one of which we are very proud.

Timor-Leste has aligned the SDGs with its Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030 and has made notable progress through effective and targeted public policies. With the current Government, we are also initiating the energy transition towards renewable energy production and establishing a consolidated policy on the blue economy.

Having ratified the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) in September 2024, Timor-Leste adopted in June of this year the national strategic framework of the Blue Economy Policy and Action Plan 2025-2030, focused on the sustainable development of marine resources, improving the livelihoods of coastal communities and protecting ecosystems.

Nonetheless, the achievement of the SDGs does not depend solely on the individual will of each nation. It requires concerted and collaborative global commitment, shared values of humanity, the fight against inequality, peaceful coexistence and the protection of our only home, Planet Earth.

We must not forget the enormous inequalities that persist in the world. For developed countries, achieving the SDGs may be a simple political choice, allocating resources in their budgets. For many others, their realization depends on development assistance, solidarity and international cooperation in terms of financial resources and the transfer of knowledge.

Timor-Leste, as part of the G7+, the group of least developed countries and of small island developing States, is especially vulnerable to the many factors that threaten the achievement of the SDGs.

It is necessary to recognize these special circumstances of small island developing States (SIDS) - a foundational principle of development since 1992, reflected in the Seville Commitment and the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS. The unique vulnerabilities of SIDS, with their small size, remote location and limited resources, require tailored and differentiated development approaches. It is particularly urgent to translate commitments into predictable and increased means of implementation.

Another relevant aspect in this context is the use of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) and ensuring SIDS have a seat at every table. It is no longer acceptable to hold discussions and make decisions on the issues that most affect us without our participation. The international financial architecture must be reformed so that the MVI is applied in development support policies, access to concessional financing and technical assistance.

Climate change is undermining already fragile food security, striking our countries with natural disasters that divert vital resources to reconstruction and humanitarian relief. For this reason, it is particularly important - especially for industrialized countries and major polluters - that commitments under the Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Climate Pact be honoured, with the allocation of resources for true climate justice. The opportunity to achieve this objective is before us at COP30 in Belém this November. It is our opportunity to channel ambition in the right direction, honouring the Seville Commitment.

It is also imperative to advance AI and digital capabilities in LDCs, while concurrently safeguarding cybersecurity. This requires investing in digital infrastructure, enhancing digital literacy and implementing e-government initiatives. Promoting AI research and innovation, cultivating talent, and establishing a policy framework are also pivotal for fostering growth. Nonetheless, international cooperation remains essential to establish comprehensive regulations governing the use and development of AI.

Excellencies,

This past May, Timor-Leste hosted the Regional Conference of the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization. This meeting had profound significance for the Committee and for all who value self-determination, democracy and human dignity. Holding this conference for the first time on Timorese soil allowed participants to witness our example as a success story and to renew collective hope for freedom and solidarity, reaffirming the crucial role of the United Nations in defending peoples.

That same week, in Dili, we hosted the first Asia-Pacific Solidarity Conference for Western Sahara. The voice of the Sahrawi people, silenced for half a century on the international stage, needs and deserves our attention and our collective, strategic action. Timor-Leste's connection with the history of Western Sahara is of a moral nature. In the words of our Prime Minister, Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão, the suffering of the Sahrawi people was a lesson for Timor-Leste when we decided our own popular consultation, since the postponement, in 1992, of the referendum promised to Western Sahara marked all those who dreamed of independence.

As the suffering of the Timorese people came to an end before that of our brothers and sisters, we will always, in this House and in every forum of dialogue, be amplifiers of the right to self-determination of Western Sahara, calling for a collective resolution of the conflict.

Drawing on its own experience of occupation and prolonged suffering, Timor-Leste continues to advocate for dialogue, mediation and multilateral engagement in the pursuit of peaceful, lasting and sustainable solutions as the path to peace.

Timor-Leste therefore welcomes the overwhelming adoption on 12 September of the New York Declaration on the peaceful settlement of the question of the Middle East and the implementation of the two-State solution.

Timor-Leste recognized the State of Palestine in 2004, two years after its own independence. We did not, however, imagine we would witness the conflict escalating to the tragic proportions we see today.

It is urgent to implement the roadmap set out in the adopted Declaration, in particular: an immediate ceasefire in Gaza; the release of all hostages; the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian State with the support and collaboration of the international community; as well as the disarmament of Hamas and the normalization of relations between Israel and neighbouring Arab States, in order to guarantee collective security in the region.

Even more urgent is the response to the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. After the situation of famine and genocide in the region was officially declared, we must waste no more time on terminology, despite the clarity of the reports. The world demands the immediate unblocking of large-scale humanitarian operations and the guarantee of security and respect for human dignity in the delivery of international assistance.

We are, however, deeply concerned by the intensification of Israel's military offensive in Gaza in the wake of peace efforts made here in New York in recent weeks. Faced with the humanitarian catastrophe, where famine already exists, the consequences will be devastating and irreversible for the civilian population.

We reiterate the urgent need to reform this Organization and its Security Council, which continue to prevent us from upholding the founding principles of the United Nations and from saving Gaza.

Excellencies,

In Ukraine, we also witness the devastating consequences of unilateralism and the disregard for international law. The cost will be borne by all of us. Timor-Leste expresses its deep concern over the grave human rights violations and the humanitarian and environmental consequences of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, including ongoing attacks against essential

infrastructure, which have caused devastating impacts on the civilian population, including women and children. We call on all parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, to spare civilians and civilian objects, to ensure the safety of all in accessing humanitarian relief, and to refrain from attacking and destroying items indispensable to civilian survival.

We cannot ignore the many other theatres of violence and instability that weigh heavily on our common conscience - from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa, from the Great Lakes region to Haiti and Southeast Asia, right on our doorstep. Each of these crises carries its own history and complexity. Yet, they share a tragic pattern: the suffering of civilians, the erosion of trust in institutions, and the perpetuation of cycles of displacement and loss. Our collective responsibility is to ensure that none of these situations are consigned to silence or neglect. They demand not only humanitarian relief and respect for international law, but also the sustained investment of this Organization in prevention, dialogue and inclusive political solutions that restore hope and dignity to those who endure them.

There can be no justice without accountability. At a time when violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, and acts of aggression are on the rise, it is urgent that we all promote and defend our institutions and their work. We are deeply concerned by the imposition of sanctions on judges and other elected officials of the International Criminal Court, and we call for their immediate lifting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Timor-Leste strongly supports the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against the Republic of Cuba, which we consider a violation of human rights that harms the Cuban people and limits their access to essential goods. Cuba is one of Timor-Leste's strongest partners in the health

sector, having trained more than one thousand professionals and provided direct assistance to our patients in hospitals. With its active role in development assistance and in promoting peace, we consider Cuba's inclusion on the list of State sponsors of terrorism entirely unjustified and therefore call for its immediate removal from the list.

In the same spirit, we are also concerned by the imposition of unilateral coercive measures, such as those currently applied to Venezuela. These sanctions impose suffering on the Venezuelan people, hinder the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and leave many behind. We call for dialogue and negotiation between the parties to alleviate the misery that afflicts the Venezuelan people.

Excellencies, to conclude:

This 80th session of the General Assembly reminds us that the United Nations, though imperfect, remains our greatest common instrument for peace and collective progress. The values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations - the sovereignty of States, respect for human rights, the peaceful settlement of disputes and cooperation for development - remain the compass that guides us.

Let us therefore renew our commitment to multilateralism – not as an abstract principle, but as a daily practice of listening, compromise and joint action. Timor-Leste, through its hard-won independence, stands as proof that when the international community acts with unity and determination, even the smallest and most fragile States can take their rightful place in the family of nations.

As demonstrated by the race to ratify the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, which will enter into force on 17 January 2026, it is in multilateralism, in respect for international law, and in inclusive dialogue among all of us that hope resides - for a better world for generations to come.

Thank you very much.