



PRIME
MINISTER

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER OF
THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE KAY RALA
XANANA GUSMÃO TO THE UNITED NATIONS THIRD
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SMALL ISLAND
DEVELOPING STATES “THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
OF SMALL ISLAND STATES THROUGH GENUINE AND
DURABLE PARTNERSHIPS”**

**Apia, Samoa
1 September 2014**

His Excellency, Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegao, Prime Minister of Samoa and President of the Conference

His Excellency, Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

His Excellency, John Ashe, President of the UN General Assembly

His Excellency, Wu Hungbo, Under Secretary General for DESA and Secretary-General for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States

Heads of State

Heads of Government

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to speak at this III UN International Conference of such importance to humanity's collective and sustainable future - "the sustainable development of SIDS through genuine and durable partnerships". I would like to thank the people and the government of Samoa for hosting this event and for the warm welcome and wonderful hospitality.

Like all the small States, Timor-Leste was colonised for centuries and only very recently achieved its sovereignty. In this short period of 12 years of independence, Timor-Leste is building the nation and is classified as a 'fragile' and 'vulnerable' State. I cannot argue with this, but it is important to make the distinction between the institutions of the State, and people who make up the State. I have to admit that our State institutions are still fragile, but our people are resilient, and they are determined to build a better future for our children.

In Timor-Leste we may be distant from the global centres of power, but this gives us the opportunity, and the time, to look closely at what is happening in the world. It allows us to come with a different perspective that is not bound by economic and political orthodoxies.

It is a perspective in which it is impossible to ignore the 2.2 billion people facing poverty and living in fragile and conflict affected nations that will not achieve even a single Millennium Development Goal by the target date of 2015.

It is a perspective that allows us to see that we are so much stronger as nation States when we come together to form partnerships and alliances, when we recognise our common challenges and our common vulnerabilities.

That is why my small nation of Timor-Leste has been working in partnership with 19 others, called “fragile and conflicted affected nations”, to make sure our voices are heard in debates about how to encourage sustainable development in the post 2015 agenda.

Our partnership is called the ‘g7+’ and it includes small island States, most of which are here at this conference.

The ‘g7+’ partnership is a voluntary association of countries that are, or have been affected by conflict and are now in transition to the next stage of development. The main objective of the ‘g7+’ is to share experiences and learn from one another, and to advocate for reforms to the way the international community engages in fragile and conflict-affected States.

For example, we are loudly advocating for the new set of global sustainable development goals to include a stand-alone goal on ‘peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law and capable institutions.’ We know from bitter experience that you cannot have development unless you first have peace and stability.

The ‘g7+’ is also advocating for action on climate change. One of the largest threats to global stability, as well as to the very existence of many small island States, is climate change. Regrettably, no issue better demonstrates the concentration of power, and the neglect and self-interest of the wealthy, than the world’s response to the threat of climate change.

The Dili Consensus document released at the end of an international development conference in Timor-Leste, in March 2013, recognised the lived reality of climate change and concluded by noting that:

“We are not part of the cause of climate change; nor can we manage its inevitable effects on our own. We must hold to account the countries that contribute most to the problem, and marshal international support for climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction. While solutions continue to elude us in our global negotiations, this is all the more reason to put climate change firmly on the development agenda and to build resilience against those impacts that can no longer be averted.”

The President of Palau earlier raised an important question, “who will be committed with us?” It is important that in the Climate Summit this month in New York we can have the right answer.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Climate change is not only about rising sea levels and changed weather conditions. It is about food security, poverty, health and access to clean water. Environmental degradation, increased food and resource insecurity, population pressures, and internal and external migration are just some of the factors that will imperil already vulnerable fragile States and stoke global tensions.

Climate change is therefore a full frontal threat to the stability of many small island nations. What the world must understand is that climate change also threatens international security and that we can give up on our sustainable development ambitions if we do not have a foundation of stability and peace.

Dear friends,

Ahead of us we have an opportunity to ensure the post-2015 development agenda is truly transformative and that this time no one is left behind. I urge us all to grasp the opportunity this Conference presents to agree on specific actions to drive change. And, if you allow me, I would recommend we avoid overly ambitious plans, taking into account the global consequences of the international financial crisis. And so, we have to adopt more realistic, phased and feasible programs. It should respect equitable distribution of aid depending on the need and priorities of each country and I fully support the establishment of better mechanisms of monitoring, accountability and implementation as the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea and the representative of the European Union referred today.

Then SAMOA will really be the pathway towards making this happen.

Then, just as the President of Seychelles believes in his people, we can also go home to our strong, resilient people, and harness their energy to build stronger institutions and global partnerships. And this partnership should be based on mutual trust and accountability from both the donors and the recipients.

We must act together with strength, courage and unity. Sustainable development, global progress and the very future of the people of some small island States depends upon it.

Last night, at the Conference Cultural Opening Ceremony, we were shown the best example of how we can all work together as true partners when we watched the incredible acts of over 500 young and talented Samoans performing in harmony. We must all follow their inspiring lead.

Thank you very much.