



Statement

by

**H.E. Ms. Sofia Borges
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Timor-Leste to the United Nations**

to the

**Eighth Session of the Open Working Group
on Sustainable Development Goals
*Conflict Prevention, Post-conflict Peacebuilding and the Promotion of
Durable Peace, Rule of Law and Governance*
6 February 2014**

New York

Check Against Delivery

Distinguished Co-Chairs,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Timor-Leste associates with the statement made by the Ambassador of Benin on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries.

Resilient societies are peaceful societies.

Resilience and peace are central to eradicating poverty, and achieving sustainable and inclusive development.

The absence of peace has been the greatest obstacle to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Progress in MDG achievement has been slowest in settings of conflict and fragility. There is little contention that freedom from fear, violence, and conflict are essential foundations for eradicating poverty, and for building peaceful and prosperous societies. It is a universal aspiration of all peoples, in all countries.

The Rio +20 outcome document reaffirmed “the importance of freedom, peace and security, respect for all human rights, including the right to development and the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to food, the rule of law, gender equality and women’s empowerment and the overall commitment to just and democratic societies for development.”

Furthermore, the Rio Principles adopted in 1992, in particular Principle 25 states: peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible. As we frame the Sustainable Development Goals, we are now equipped with a broader understanding of development than the one we had 15 years ago. Central to that understanding is the lived experience that there can be no development without peace, and there can be no peace without development.

Peace is not merely the absence of violence or conflict. It is a condition that enables people to prosper socially, economically and environmentally. It is about ensuring equality, resilience and strengthening the social contract between governments and their people.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

We want to eradicate poverty. We want to establish the conditions for our people to have access to decent jobs and basic services, including water, sanitation, education and health care. We want to live in harmony with our natural environment. In order to do that, we know we must have peace and effective state institutions based on the rule of law.

Timor-Leste endorses the report and recommendations of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons, published last May with separate illustrative goals on good governance and effective institutions, as well as ensuring stable and peaceful societies. These issues truly are universal and critical to eradicating poverty for those in the most vulnerable situations.

Our experience in Timor-Leste, reinforced by empirical evidence, is that conflict and vulnerability finds fertile ground in the very development challenges we are trying to tackle. These include youth unemployment, inequality, sub-standard service delivery, lack of food security and the ineffective management of natural resources.

Our turning point was the 2007 Timor-Leste Standard of Living Survey, following the 2006 political crisis in the country, and ensuing insecurity. We discovered that poverty rates had doubled in some areas, and overall poverty had increased by 15 per cent. This was despite an investment of over 8 billion dollars by the international community since 2001, together with a concerted effort to achieve the MDGs.

We had to act, and we did. Expedient reforms that strengthened our institutions, improving the delivery of essential services to the population, accountability,

reconciliation, transparency, the rule of law and an inclusive political dialogue swiftly lead to increased economic resilience and growth in only 5 years. From the birth of our independent nation, we had embarked on reconciliation internationally and among our own divided community. We needed everyone to know they would be safe and to create the space for inclusive political dialogue. We used customary ways to heal, and today we are a stronger country for it. Our country now continues to achieve unprecedented double-digit economic growth, and we have witnessed a 9 per cent decrease in poverty and gains in service delivery.

Yet, others have been less fortunate. In many parts of the world, we are still a long way from achieving lasting peace – and thus sustainable development. Globally, there are 1.5 billion people living in settings of conflict and fragility; they are among the poorest, most vulnerable and most in need. They share the global desire to have access to decent water and sanitation, education, health care and jobs. We have an obligation to make sure that the post-2015 development agenda does not leave them behind again. As the example of Timor-Leste demonstrates, they will not be able to achieve their aspiration without first ending violence and building effective state capacity to deliver essential services.

Ours is not an isolated experience. We continue to measure progress and coordinate the support of our international partners. Our collective learning from the MDGs has shown us the value of nationally relevant targets and indicators when coupled with global goals. Our gains have founded in strong country leadership and ownership of our development.

If our aspiration is to eradicate poverty and develop prosperous societies, we need to recognize the nexus between peace, stability and the development of inclusive state institutions. The Millennium Declaration brought together the linkages between peace, development and the eradication of poverty. However, the omission of this link in the MDGs resulted in unevenness and gaps in their progress and has been a fundamental obstacle to their achievement in Timor-Leste.

Timor-Leste support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets on governance and the rule of law, and peace and stability. Only through this inclusion can the post-2015 development framework be transformative and leave no one behind.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

I wish us all continued fruitful discussions today and in the months ahead, and to express our appreciation and confidence in your work thus far.

Thank you.