



**CLOSING REMARKS BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE**

**SECOND CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE ON
PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD INTERNATIONAL
ENGAGEMENT IN FRAGILE STATES AND SITUATIONS**

Health Sciences Institute in Comoro, Dili

18 August 2009

Excellencies

Honourable Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the end of these two days of reflection and discussion we can conclude that, despite some divergence of opinions and our different experiences, we are all in agreement that the main conclusions regarding fragile States are the following:

First – Every Nation is unique and that there is a combination of geographic, cultural, historical, ethnic and institutional factors that causes States to be fragile, thus requiring specific case-by-case approaches to nation building. The measures to be adopted in Timor-Leste must be different from the ones to be applied in Afghanistan, in the Central African Republic, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Sierra Leone or in Haiti.

Second – Regardless of the concepts and definitions used, there are common factors to all these countries: recent or latent situations of conflict and widespread poverty. And they require a set of solutions to overcome these enormous challenges.

Third – The International Community may play a vital role in overcoming the fragile situation of some States, but its actions should be conducted and led by the States themselves and by the People of those States, hence the need for these consultative meetings and for International Dialogue, so that the international community may “help to help us” in the best possible way.

Fourth – This alignment of wills has already been determined. The meetings before this one, and those to take place in the future, show that the International Community is committed to promoting a constructive involvement between the national and international shareholders in countries facing problems that we call “fragility”. The adoption of 10 structuring principles to achieve this goal leads us to believe that, in a long term perspective, international intervention will contribute towards the sustainable development of our Nations and our Peoples.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Timor-Leste is a blessed Country, for in 10 years of freedom and 7 years of State building we have made remarkable progress with the support of the International Community.

There is still much to be done to reduce poverty in our Nation, to make sure that past conflicts are not rekindled and to eliminate regional imbalances. Furthermore, despite the international

assistance, we are aware that this progress would not have been possible without the steadfast will of the nation's leaders, our civil society and our People, which have demanded reforms to improve governance, and to ensure national security and stability, as well as institutional development.

This leads me to believe that the support of the International Community will be of no avail unless there is, in the first place, a spirit of national unity and cohesion, of agreed vision regarding the future, achieved through the active participation of all national actors. Therefore, I say again that more than ever we need political maturity and a collective vision concerning our future, so that we can achieve development and wellbeing for all.

Strong political institutions and a strong State (and here I mean all State Institutions, not only the executive) are the key for the development of the nation. Only in this way will it be possible for the populations to trust their Institutions and to feel motivated to take part in the development process, eschewing internal conflicts and assuming a role of accountability and cooperation.

Undoubtedly Timor-Leste needs to find again the spirit of national cohesion – namely by its political actors – so as to achieve the common goal of stability and development; the same spirit we have already seen in our history through the rare, if not unique, history of our liberation.

The State – and once again I mean all Bodies of Sovereignty and not just the Government – has been implementing vital reforms in the country, in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation of which we can all be proud. This was how we solved the recent 2008 crisis, and this is how we have been striving to overcome the difficult problems our young nation faces: including corruption, social injustices and insecurity.

Honourable guests,

The experience conveyed to us by our dear friend, Armand Kasumbu, from the Democratic Republic of Congo made us reflect, with some sadness, on how State building is such a broad concept, requiring deep change both nationally and within the international context.

What is happening in the Democratic Republic of Congo? In addition to the ethnic issues, can the natural resources wealth of some countries also be their curse?

I ask why the intervention of the international community, which has been so successful in some countries, cannot even reduce the suffering of the people in others.

I will go even further and ask you this, from a historical and social context standpoint: are all countries ready to immediately adopt the democratic values upheld by the more developed countries?

Democracy is not always a prerequisite for economic achievement. Take for instance the cases of China, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and even Chile. These are all examples of economic successes where the national values have diverged from the espoused standards of democracy.

In the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, I was left contemplating whether the country was ready to embrace democratic representation in line with the standards of the modern world. Perhaps a longer transition period, to allow for the promotion of national cohesion, deeper participation by the various ethnic groups, and the development of a common vision of development for the Country, may have resulted in a smoother path to peace and State development that representative democracy before its time could...

Please not that I am not saying that democracy and its values, which we in Timor-Leste defend and cherish, are not essential for nations to develop in a constructive manner and to promote the fundamental rights of citizens, equality of opportunity, and the imperatives of justice and economic growth.

What I am saying is that often the timing is important, and that urgency in calling elections to appoint representatives may result in pockets of social and political exclusion as some feel alienated from central decision making and removed from the rewards of progress.

Let us consider the case of the first elections in Afghanistan and Iraq, which took place only a short time ago. Regrettably, to an extent these elections failed to meet the expectations of the people in improving the living conditions and circumstances in those countries - and they have not yet resulted in the achievement of peace and stability.

For a family that does not have enough food to eat, lives in precarious conditions and has no access to health care, democracy can be a distant and abstract a concept. And it is often through economic growth, social justice and the alleviation of poverty that democracy can best be consolidated.

The international community may wish to consider the merits of longer transition periods, in order to enable processes to be established that ensure full democratic participation and avoid exclusion – that is “democratic exclusion”.

Comparing our brother country of the Democratic Republic of Congo with Timor-Leste, it seems to me that our task was clearly less demanding, since we only have a million people living in a nation of around 15 thousand square km – although we too are both the victims and the beneficiaries of our gift of natural resources. Democratic consolidation has achieving substantial results for us, although even in our small country many groups feel alienated and lacking direct representation.

While the Democratic Republic of Congo is a country where most are poor, natural resources of diamonds and oil abound, which has aroused the interest of industrialized countries. However, as the Democratic Republic of Congo lacks infrastructure to exploit its own resources, it is other countries that to a large degree are benefiting from its natural wealth.

Another example to consider, in order to understand such dilemmas, is that of Guinea-Bissau. This country has around the same population as Timor-Leste, as well as a similar history and a language in common. It has been overcoming one serious institutional crisis after another. But what is the root of the problem?

We know that ethnic issues, in particular the presence of tribal groups within the Armed Forces, as well as the increasing use of the country as an international drug trafficking hub, have constraining the process of transition towards national stability and development. But, to what extent is the International Community concerned about this State?

The recently elected President of Guinea-Bissau spoke a short time ago of the urgent need to strengthen national unity to enable economic growth and social development. Can the International Community make a greater contribution towards this goal?

I would also like to mention another case: Afghanistan. Afghanistan is located in an important geo-strategic area, as well as being the largest opium producer in the world. This country has seen successive military operations as well as international aid for its reconstruction. And yet, the international response has been insufficient to meet the basic requirements of the people. Is the internal political instability the sole cause of their poverty? Knowing the external issues involved, is it not possible to do better?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The purpose of this process of consultation is to determine what we can do better – we the fragile States and our Development Partners – to improve the living conditions of our people.

Promoting an atmosphere of peace, security and trust is fundamental to providing an environment that allows economic, social and political development.

Good governance is also essential so that our Development Partners have confidence to invest in areas that involve high costs, such as infrastructure, education and the development of human resources, but which also provide the greatest benefit to developing countries.

Timor-Leste is committed to reforms that not only promote economic growth, but that produce results that show how grateful we are to the countries that have been supporting Timor-Leste from day one.

We can and we want to be an international example of what an effective intervention by the International Community can do in terms of putting a nation on the path to sustainable development, and this is why we are taking part in these consultations and sharing our experiences with such earnest and good will.

Participation by civil society is, therefore, essential - as is improving communication with the our people, through listening and responding to their aspirations. In poor countries, however, these actions must be considered and they must contemplate the immediate requirements of those in great need – even if it results in later controversies about “buying peace”.

The millions of dollars entering our country from the Development Partners, or the use of our natural resources to fund long term projects, is for nothing if we do not manage to effectively reduce poverty.

We do not want a partial approach to the problem, but rather we see it as a whole. We want to proceed with dignity and respect, adopting a common goal, changing our mentality – not just within Timor-Leste but also through placing our achievements on the international agenda, and if possible, supporting and contributing to the development of other countries in difficult situations.

The participation in this important International Dialogue helps us to see more clearly the road we have walked and the road that is still ahead of us, by sharing our experiences and knowledge with our friends from more stable and developed situations than us, and friends that are in similar or worse situations than us. Most of all, this participation highlights the importance of our accountability as a Nation-State in the International Community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to stress the extreme importance of the draft report we have discussed here, and I urge all of you to convey your comments to the Ministry of Finance's Coordination Office, in order to complete the report for publication by the OECD. In this way, we can be united in promoting the long term development of the States that are considered fragile.

We are confident that this consultation process will yield positive results, and that in the end - which as Ms Bella Bird said should be in 2011 - not only the countries I have mentioned today but also Burundi, Nepal, Liberia, Sudan and others, will benefit from the merit of this work, so that we all can leave behind the hardships of poverty and conflict, and join efforts to achieve the millennium goals.

I thank all those who contributed to making this event a success, and especially to those of you who came from afar to make your important contribution, strengthening the spirit of this consultative conference and ultimately working together in order to create a better world.

I would like to end by quoting an African proverb that many of you must know:

“The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second-best time is now!”.

Thank you very much.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão

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