



**MINISTER OF PLANNING AND STRATEGIC INVESTMENT,  
CHIEF NEGOTIATOR OF THE  
COUNCIL FOR THE FINAL DELIMITATION OF MARITIME BOUNDARIES  
AND EMINENT PERSON OF THE g7+**

## **Speech**

**by His Excellency Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão  
at the International Colloquium on  
the Challenges of Peacebuilding and Statebuilding in  
Fragile and Conflict-Affected States**

**Faculty of Law of the University of Coimbra**

**Coimbra**

**29 May 2017**

Dear Rector of the University of Coimbra, Professor Doutor João Gabriel Silva

Dear Coordinator of the Coordinating Board, Professor Doutor Rui Moura Ramos and Members of the Institute for Legal Research of the Faculty of Law of the University of Coimbra,

Dear Secretary-General and Representatives of g7+ Member Countries,

Dear Fellow Speakers, Professors and Students,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to return to this enchanted city, which has always been charming to me, as much on arrivals as on farewells.

I would like to start by thanking you for the warmth and friendship with which I was welcomed to this great academic institution. I also want to thank you for your support in co-hosting this international colloquium on the challenges faced by fragile and conflict-affected countries.

Today is a historic day for us, the g7+ member countries. It is the first time we are meeting in Portugal and I believe that the same feeling of solidarity and friendship linking the Portuguese and the Timorese may embrace all the peoples that make up the g7+. I am talking of around 237 million people who, upon feeling the solidarity, respect and trust that define the Portuguese people, will surely feel inspired to overcome their fragilities and to seek new solutions for their own problems.

The subject of this International Colloquium leads me to explain, as a preliminary remark, why Timor-Leste has decided to be involved in the International Dialogue for Peace- and State- Building.

After 24 difficult years of occupation, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, 1999, with the unwavering support of the Portuguese people and State, we were could finally decide, among tears and suffering, about our right to independence.

At the time, over 70% of our infrastructures were destroyed but we had a people that, despite everything, was determined to look towards the future with hope. The fragility of the

institutions and the lack of financial resources hindered the young Timorese State from delivering quick solutions to the problems that affected the society.

We suffered setbacks and we went through a cycle of violence that is common to many post-conflict nations.

The most serious crisis took place in 2006. Our military and police were in upheaval, contributing to the crisis instead of contributing to national stability. The disputes and conflicts led to widespread violence, resulting in around 150,000 internally displaced persons.

International Organizations foresaw that it would take 10 to 15 years to overcome the crisis, based on the comparison to similar events in many other countries. However, in 2007, the new Government made a commitment to solve these problems within a 2-year period, and it was successful in fulfilling it.

These terrible events made us realise that we needed to come together as a nation, to reconcile our differences and to reflect carefully on the need to review the past, understand the present and seek the solutions that only we, Timorese, could find.

As such, we started a dialogue with the entire Timorese people and we began to address the root causes of our problems. Only after this dialogue we could start working on building the country and ensure lasting peace, under the motto “Goodbye Conflict, Welcome Development”.

Timor-Leste had already great experience in dealing with international donors – our first State Budget, in 2002, amounted to 65 million US dollars. Indeed, the donors imposed its own priorities to the Timorese Government, especially regarding technical assistance, which only prolonged the dependence to foreign aid. And who is dependent, dear ladies and gentlemen, cannot be truly free.

And all this subsisted in spite of the Declaration of Paris, in 2005, that had set the fundamental principles to attain Aid Effectiveness.

Since you all have access to a short document regarding the historical path of g7+, I only want to stress that, in 2008 in Acra/Gana, we have participated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. During group discussions, 7 countries (Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste) have committed themselves to adopt the 10 Principles on Fragile States, as a pilot-initiative.

Later, in April 2010, we hosted a meeting of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. Since then, Timor-Leste has been dedicated to the design of a new architecture for development and new forms of engaging fragile and conflict-affected States. During that meeting, it was issued the Dili Declaration, a document highlighting the importance of having the development process being led and owned by the recipient countries.

One year after, the findings of this dialogue were submitted to the 4<sup>th</sup> High Level Meeting on Aid Effectiveness, held in Busan/South Korea, which endorsed the New Deal for engagement in fragile states.

It was recognized that transposing fragility was a long and slow process that called for national leadership and fellowship. Furthermore, it called for a change in the international aid policies since, on one hand, sometimes these policies are not adequate to the circumstances and realities of the recipient countries and, on the other hand, it is conditional to political reforms in the recipient countries.

During this exchange of experiences between g7+ countries, we have managed to include our real needs on the global development agenda, in particular with the objective of truly promoting peace in our societies, while demanding that “nothing about us, without us”.

The g7+ has grown, and today we are 20 countries from the Caribbean, the Pacific, Africa and Asia who are determined to make international aid more effective and to engage in global actions for the promotion of peace and reconciliation through solutions that are appropriate to and led by each recipient country.

We have learned from each other and we have been mutually supportive through what we call Fragile-to-Fragile Support, promoting cooperation towards development. This is only possible because we are bound by a strong desire to leave our fragility behind, both as individual countries and as a group.

Ladies and gentlemen,

After learning our lesson from the Millennium Development Goals, we made a political commitment through the New Deal and the G7+ to adopt the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. We made our voice heard, particularly by including Goal 16: "*Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions*".

The 2030 Agenda, which seeks to transform our world by ending extreme poverty without leaving anyone behind - by reaching out first those who are the most behind -, may have its goals compromised unless due attention is given to fragile and conflict-affected countries. In fact, it is estimated that by 2030 extreme poverty will be concentrated in these States.

Last week we had the honour of hosting in Dili the *Global Conference on the 2030: A Roadmap for Implementing Sustainable Development Goals in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States*. We were very pleased to receive partners and friends from all over the world to take part in that meeting and to contribute towards the best possible roadmap for implementing SDGs in Timor-Leste.

Evidently, this roadmap is aligned with the goals and targets in our Strategic Development Plan and takes our national context into account, so that we may confidently transition to resilience by 2030.

We are now hoping to overcome the challenge of tracking and monitoring SDG's, which is a no less complex task and requires institutional capacity. We want to focus on developing our data-collection and statistical skills so that we can participate with inclusive tracking and monitoring that involves all national actors.

More than ever, it is essential for G7+ countries to share experiences and to cooperate with each other, including tracking the implementation of these goals.

As such, it is with great satisfaction that today we sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the g7+ and the University of Coimbra towards future cooperation on research initiatives concerning peacebuilding and Statebuilding.

We are confident that students, technicians and leaders in our countries will have much to gain from this cooperation, since, and as I have stated before, only by fully understanding our historical, cultural, political, economic and social context can we learn from our heavy past and plan our future. While we do not plan on failing in our goal of becoming resilient, we know that we can fail in planning actual measures for achieving our goal.

Your Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen,

Timor-Leste is very proud to be one of the founding members of g7+. As such, I must thank you again for giving the member countries of this group the opportunity to share their experiences on the complex journey of transition from fragility to resilience. These countries are all very different in terms of their history, culture and ideology. Nevertheless, they face common challenges and had the humility to recognise that it is easier to walk a path if one does not walk it alone.

The commitment by the g7+ countries is primarily to their own peoples, through restoring peace and creating conditions that enable development. We know that by speaking as one we can have our voices heard internationally with greater impact and credibility. This is why we are so close to each other, despite the geographic distance between us.

Last month, the president of the g7+, His Excellency the Minister of Finance of Sierra Leone, Mr Momodu Lamin Kargbo, the Minister of Finance of Timor-Leste, the Secretary-General of the g7+ and I visited Portugal and had the chance to meet with senior Portuguese officers in order to better explain the mission of the g7+. We were enormously pleased to see that out of those meetings we were provided with a facility in Lisbon to house a representative of our group, enabling the g7+ member countries to be closer to Europe. As such, I must again thank the City Hall of Lisbon, and Mayor Fernando Medina.

This visit last month, which included a stop in Coimbra, also resulted in the opportunity to host this International Colloquium on the challenges faced by fragile and conflict-affected countries in terms of peacebuilding and Statebuilding. We received prompt support not only from Portuguese public authorities but also from this prestigious academic institution.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In today's world, the privilege and wealth of a few prevail over the interests of peoples and civilisations. Instead of creating strong alliances for the common good, we see rising inequalities. The feelings of injustice and distrust by the people in their political leaders enable the progression of intolerance and violence.

However, these inequalities are not exclusive to the poorest, fragile and conflict-affected countries. In rich and supposedly developed countries – the paladins of democratic principles and values – we also see institutions that are fragile and corrupt, unable to adapt to the changing of the times and to contribute to national and international progress, and instead create a cascade of crises throughout the world.

These inequalities have been contributing to the arise of organizations whose only objective is the recruitment of reckless people who become easy preys of intolerance, extremism and violence. These people move freely, physically or virtually, in today's globalised world, causing worldwide insecurity and a generalised fear of "others", even if the "other" has the terrorised face of a hungry and sick child or woman fleeing from war-torn scenarios.

As we all know, inequality is driven by economic and political interests and institutionalised by the major international corporations and organisations. The summits held by developed countries or countries with large economies, such as G7 (that according to yesterday's media, became known as G6+Trump), or G8 and G20, have always strengthen those who are already powerful, without giving voice to poor and fragile countries... much less a chance influence to change the state of things...!

Indeed, the discussion by world leaders on situations of conflict continues to be focused on the costs of sending peacekeeping forces, which often end up extending the conflicts they are sent to quell. That money would be much better spent on measures preventing crises and conflicts in the first place.

The international debate on extreme poverty, which affects over 1.5 billion people, who are forced to beg for humanitarian assistance, is centred on the transfer of aid, including its rules and compensations, rather than the fact that an enormous amount of wealth is accumulated by a small few. The global development agenda must discuss seriously not just the extreme poverty of some, but also the extreme wealth of others.

We need to ask ourselves who profits from conflict. Who monitors the large corporations that manufacture and sell weapons and the Governments that export them? Every international report and evaluation does a fantastic job in pointing out the ambition for economic and political power, the corruption and greed of the leaders and agencies of fragile and conflict-affected countries, holding them responsible for the failings in their nations. Still, those same reports always lack the courage to identify those who continue profiting from other people's misery. And this goes without mentioning the recent arms business, which amounts to 100 billion American dollars!

We need Peace! We need an inclusive, fair and developed world. However, we know that one cannot install universal values, consolidate peace or build democracies by way of military means. Ill-guided approaches that fail to observe the multiple and diverse factors of fragility or that, worse still, are supported by contradictions or conflicts of interest, only contribute to the fuelling of inequalities, radicalism and extremist acts.

We cannot continue ignoring the complexity of today's world and the way in which crises and their impacts are interconnected and affect every corner of the globe. In an age where crises gain such media coverage, one cannot claim not to know the true cost of conflicts and the tragic effects they have on the lives of millions of people.

We cannot continue ignoring the lessons of history and refusing to learn from the errors of the past. After World War II, the number of States that were unable to stand on their own feet tripled. The lack of strong and consolidated institutions and the endemic



poverty resulting from the lack of resources – or sometimes bad governance in managing those resources – quickly led to rampant imbalances and differentiation between countries, with the markets dictating the fates of fragile peoples left without any help.

Then, as now, solidarity between North and South continues to be a mirage. The focus on certain nations continues to be driven by greed and an unbridled desire for energy and resources. It is this asymmetrical relation between rich States and poor regions that radicalises speeches of hate and vengeance, which can lead to extreme barbarity. The increasing northbound migratory movements by people who are hungry and tired of violence are the most evident and the public effect of this lack of truth when responding to poverty.

In view of this, failing to reflect seriously on the root causes of the problems we face today is a risk that may have a steep cost and that History would have never imagined to be obliged to pay. In today's modern world, having even just one people or one country suffering should be considered a tragedy for every country in the world – for the whole of humankind!

We must all be held accountable for these problems, lest we all become responsible for mankind's failure.

Your Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen,

Throughout the regional and international forums that Timor-Leste has been taking part, we have conveyed our perspective of the world as a small country that fought alone for 24 years to be part of a better world, within a new world order.

Instead, it is with enormous sadness we realise that we are part of a world disorder, in which distrust, risks and dangers are far greater than in the time of the Cold War.

Consequently, we have also been reflecting carefully on international development aid that, instead of being directed to the true needs of the recipient countries, is held hostage by the “superior interests” of the sponsoring countries.

And, in the name of democracy and human rights, we see rushed and ill-advised interventions starting wars that spread and multiply the number of innocent human lives lost and the number of people fleeing their homes without a place to go.

We have also reflected on the approach by the international community to promote peace and the fight against poverty in situations of conflict. We see that the key issues in international debates present a serious deviation, leading to actions that, if not altogether negative, are almost always wrong.

Indeed, the discussion by world leaders on situations of conflict continues to be focused on the costs of sending peacekeeping forces, which often end up prolonging the conflicts. That money would be much better spent on measures preventing crises and conflicts in the first place.

Excellencies,  
Dear Students,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last 20<sup>th</sup> of May, Timor-Leste celebrated the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Restoration of its Independence. As happens every five years, these celebrations coincided with the swearing-in of a new President of the Republic, in this case His Excellency Dr Francisco Guterres “Lu-Olo”, who earned the trust of the Timorese people to lead the country in facing its development challenges.

After fifteen years as a sovereign State, I can say that today our People live in peace, safety and stability. The structural reforms carried out in our public agencies, within a constant process of correction and improvement, enabled us to establish the foundation for jumpstarting our economic development.

Step by step, we have been transitioning from a fragile country into a nation that moves towards progress and resilience.

Nevertheless, we still have many challenges ahead of us as a nation. We need to provide quality education to our children and young people and we need to build the capacity of our human resources. We need to improve access to health services and to build core infrastructure. We need to boost our embryonic private sector, which should drive our economy in the future. We need – as the fragile State that we are – to eliminate poverty in our country!

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Students,

The battle for the liberation of Timor-Leste was also fought at the United Nations, an organisation that resulted from the dream of assembling every State in the world together in an effort towards peace and collective security.

International law was created by the Community of Nations in order to regulate the relations between States and to contribute to the resolution of international disputes in a constructive and peaceful manner, and to ensure that it is not always the strongest nation that prevails.

In the past as in the present, the Timorese advocate this view of the international system and law. As such, we wish for the international system to be rebuilt in a manner that is fair and that makes use of inclusive dialogue and diplomacy.

We believe it is unquestionable that the world needs new strategic partnerships of cooperation towards world peace, in which every State is treated equally. The authority of a State cannot be measured by its territorial area, its wealth or its military or economic power.

Fragile and conflict-affected States do not fit in any of these categories. However, without ensuring the individual dignity of each of these peoples, without ensuring a correct approach and cooperation that complements the efforts made by each of these countries, we would be underestimating a crisis that may end up having regional – if not global – impact.

It is not just a humanitarian matter or a matter of humanity. It is also a matter of global security and promotion of peace and harmony throughout the world. This is an opportunity to give back the hope to men, women and children who have been left behind in the history of progress of humankind.

Thank you very much.

29 May 2017

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão