

BRIEF REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT TAUR MATAN RUAKE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE AT THE LUNCHEON FOR HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL THE HONOURABLE SIR PETER COSGROVE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Dili, Nicolau Lobato Presidential Palace, 3 March 2016

Dear Governor-General,

Lady Cosgrove.

Welcoming Your Excellencies to Dili is a great honour for me and for Isabel and represents a new occasion for us to celebrate the lasting and stable friendship between our peoples and our countries.

It's with the utmost pleasure that we receive the visit of a friend who knows Timor-Leste so well and who has contributed so decisively to the peace and security of the Timorese people at times of national crisis.

I welcome the entire delegation, and wish that you have a pleasant stay in Dili.

I just had the pleasure of bestowing upon the Governor-General the Grand Collar of the Order of Timor-Leste, the country's highest honour.

It is a token of our deep-felt appreciation – mine and the Timorese people's – for Your Excellency's remarkable action and personal contribution, over the years, to the stability and security of our country and our region, and to the strengthening of the friendship and trust between Timor-Leste and Australia.

The friendship between Timorese and Australians has been anchored by history, intensive exchange and strong family bonds uniting our peoples.

Our peoples shared moments of pain and great tribulation.

During World War II, the Timorese people demonstrated unambiguous and wholehearted solidarity with Australia. We supported the Australian military with all our determination and capacity. Our people suffered heavy casualties. The sacrifice of thousands upon thousands of Timorese men and women contributed to the defence and security of Australia.

During the Timorese liberation struggle, the Australian people also demonstrated strong, generous, and selfless solidarity with us. The Australians welcomed and comforted thousands and thousands of Timorese refugees.

In 1999, the unsurpassed capacity of the Australian military, under Your Excellency's command, was decisive for our objective of stabilizing the country. We worked together to restore the security of the population and to save lives. The success of that work and the work of the United Nations was the foundation upon which the Timorese built, for the first time in our history, a democracy under the rule of law.

Timor-Leste and Australia remain allies, now, in the objective of achieving higher levels of social and economic development, eradicating extreme poverty and scarcity in Timor-Leste and in our region.

I want to express to you, Dear Governor-General, and to the Australian government, our recognition for the strong support from Australia to our nation-building effort.

The cooperation between our countries is extensive and productive – in the areas of agriculture, education, health, security and others sectors of consolidation of our state institutions. I also want to express our recognition for the access given to Timorese youths to the seasonal worker programme in Australia, and underline the great importance it has to supplement the job market to which our youths have access, and in developing their technical and professional skills.

The cultural and economic exchange between our peoples is intensive. Australia's assistance is important and appreciated by the Timorese people.

The cooperation between Timor-Leste and Australia contributes to the strengthening of regional stability and security. We want to continue strengthening and expanding this cooperation, to promote a more integrated economic development in the region, generating wellbeing for its populations.

You Excellency.

The demarcation of our maritime borders is a national priority for Timor-Leste. It is an unfinished business in our relations with Australia. The resolution of this matter will contribute to deepen our neighbourly and friendship relations and to strengthen mutual trust.

I learned with satisfaction about statements by His Excellency the Prime Minister of Australia regarding the importance of the peaceful resolution of all disputes within the constraints of international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. And also statements by the vice leader of the opposition in the Parliament of Australia that converge on the importance of strengthening a world order based on the international rule of law, including the said Convention.

I believe that our peoples – mutually supportive throughout history – and our two democracies will know how to find, through negotiation and dialogue, mutually advantageous solutions, so that this process may be a new contribution to the strengthening of regional stability, trust, and leadership.

Without peace, there is no development. This firm belief has guided our nation-building effort in Timor-Leste.

We achieved peace, built internal and external reconciliation, and we are working to reach new levels of economic and social development, to provide wellbeing for all, eradicate poverty, and improve the living conditions of our people. Peace and stability and essential for us to meet these objectives.

The world in which we live seems increasingly ruled by unpredictability.

War and instability – whether political, economic or social – have a negative impact on the situation across vast regions. The cruel and shocking violation of basic human rights and of human dignity is an everyday reality in many countries.

By contrast, our continent and our region are fortunately stable and continue to be an engine of worldwide growth, despite the slowdown of economic expansion in recent years. Nevertheless, there are still serious security and development challenges. These challenges must be met within the constraints of international law and in the framework of preservation and strengthening of peace and stability in the continent.

The world is facing new challenges: from climate change to terrorism and other forms of major international criminality.

The development of countries requires investment and a stable and predictable economic and stable environment.

The relations of cooperation and neighbourliness, as well as stability, have been key to the development and to the successes achieved by the countries in our continent over the last three decades. For us to be able to successfully respond to the global challenges, we must preserve and strengthen the cooperation between nations, the dialogue, the negotiation, and the respect for international law.

I will continue to work towards the development of our relations, to contribute to those objectives and strengthen the great friendship and cooperation between Timor-Leste and Australia.

I conclude by wishing the greatest success for Your Excellency and prosperity and wellbeing for the people of Australia.

I propose a toast:

To the prosperity of our countries and the deepening of the friendship between the Timorese and Australian peoples.

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