



PRESIDÊNCIA DO  
**CONSELHO  
DE MINISTROS**



Gabinete para o  
Desenvolvimento de  
Políticas Públicas  
Estratégicas  
(GDPPE)

## **2026 TIMOR-LESTE AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS MEETING**

Ministry of Finance | 25–26 May 2026 | Dili, Timor-  
Leste

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### **SPEECH — INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT SECTOR**

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*Presidency of the Council of Ministers*

#### **I. OPENING**

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*Your Excellency the Prime Minister,  
Honourable Ministers and Vice-Ministers,  
Distinguished Development Partners,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

In August 2024, the United Nations Secretary-General reminded us: Timor-Leste has won the battle for independence. It has won the battle for

democracy. But now it must win the battle for development.

That battle is fought in every courtroom, every municipal office, every classroom. It is fought in the quiet work of building institutions that will outlast any of us in this room.

Today, I have the honour of presenting the achievements and priorities of Timor-Leste's Institutional Development Sector — a sector whose work connects, in ways both visible and invisible, to every dimension of our national life.

## **II. THE FRAMEWORK — GOVERNING WITH PURPOSE**

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Aligned with the IX Constitutional Government Programme, the Strategic Development Plan 2011–2030, the Sustainable Development Goals, and our ASEAN commitments, this sector is a system — designed to deliver rule of law, modernize public administration, promote inclusive and decentralized development, and strengthen our defence and security.

At its core, this system rests on a simple conviction: good institutions are the foundation of everything else. A state that is predictable and reliable builds

trust — the trust of its citizens, and of the partners and investors whose engagement can help us grow. And a state that is efficient and transparent ensures that our significant resources reach the people they were intended for.

*[Slide 7 — Empowering a New Generation]*

### **III. INSTITUTIONS ARE BUILT FOR THOSE NOT YET BORN**

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The fundamentals still matter. Values like unity, education, discipline, compassion, and hard work remain evergreen. But foundations are not meant to be sat on. They are meant to be built upon.

The next chapter of Timor-Leste requires not only economic progress, but also the rejuvenation of our institutions — institutions that are more responsive, more transparent, and more connected to the realities of a new generation. Because the future cannot be built on memory alone. It must also be built with the courage to evolve.

Our Prime Minister said it clearly:

*"We believe that investing in future leaders will help our country better navigate global challenges, as well as foster innovation and*

*contribute to a sustainable and prosperous future."*

Every reform we implement, every institution we strengthen, is an investment in a generation that will carry this work forward with pride. As our leaders reminded us: "Together, we will build a homeland that is ever more just, inclusive, and resilient." These are not ceremonial words. They are a contract — between the state and its people, between the present and the future. And it is precisely through strong, renewed institutions that this promise becomes real.

*[Slide 8 — Key Achievements]*

## **IV. WHAT WE HAVE BUILT — KEY ACHIEVEMENTS**

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Let me turn now to what we have built. Our security forces are stronger, our borders better managed, our communities safer. Justice is being brought closer to the people through new institutions, digital systems, and meaningful reform.

Our defence institutions are being modernized and international partnerships deepened. Decentralization is underway across all the municipalities. And on the world stage, Timor-Leste's seat is secure — in the g7+, in ASEAN, in the WTO,

in the United Nations, in the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, and in the global climate agenda. As a small island nation acutely exposed to climate change, our voice in that conversation is not only legitimate — it is necessary.

These are the building blocks of a state that works — for its people, for its region, and for the generations to come.

And institutions, at their best, do more than govern. They enable. A justice system that functions gives an entrepreneur the confidence to sign a contract. A financial system that is well-supervised and deepened gives a small business owner in Baucau the same access to opportunity that others take for granted elsewhere. This is what institutional development means in practice — not structures on paper, but conditions in life.

That is also why the discipline of how we manage our resources is, itself, an institutional question. Institutions are what turn significant resources into lasting opportunity. It is the quality of our governance, not the size of our fund, that will determine which path we take.

The same institutions that deliver justice and manage our borders are the institutions that make Timor-Leste a place where investment grows, where domestic enterprise is nurtured, and where our people — not the ground beneath our feet — become the true measure of our progress.

*[Slide 25 — ASEAN Opportunities]*

## **V. ASEAN — THE STRATEGIC HORIZON OF OUR GENERATION**

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Distinguished Partners,

Our ASEAN membership — achieved in October 2025 — is not the end of a long journey. It is the beginning of a new one. ASEAN gives us access to a market of 680 million people and a regional GDP of 3.6 trillion dollars. But its value is measured not only in trade statistics — it is measured in the standards of governance, rule of law, digital interoperability, and social inclusion it demands of its members.

Timor-Leste brings to ASEAN a young, vibrant democracy built on the conviction that freedom and development are inseparable. In each of ASEAN's three pillars, the work of this sector is present — and it is through that work that we will earn our place as a full and contributing member of this community.

From our accession in October 2025 to the Chairmanship in 2029, we have a defining window. We are not spectators of ASEAN integration. We are builders of it. And by 2029, Timor-Leste will assume the Chairmanship of ASEAN — a moment that will reflect the confidence this region has placed in us.

But ASEAN integration also raises a deeper question — what kind of economy are we building, and for whom? The Petroleum Fund has given us something extraordinary. And precisely because it is so significant, we have both the privilege and the responsibility to use it wisely — as a springboard for the economy we want to build for tomorrow. If we could not know whether we would be the leaders in this room today, or the child learning to read in Ermera tomorrow, what kind of economy would we leave behind? The answer to that question is the answer to our development agenda.

The new generation will take over this country with the new sunrise. And when they do, they deserve to inherit a homeland that is diverse, resilient, and full of possibility — one that reflects the full potential of its people. Human capital is not a soft priority. It is the engine of everything else.

*[Slide 26]*

## V-A. THE FUTURE WE ARE BUILDING

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Allow me to pause for a moment on what connects the work of this sector to the future we are building.

Timor-Leste has one of the youngest populations in Southeast Asia. But a demographic dividend, alone, is not sufficient. When children grow up healthy, educated, and supported by a state that can reach them wherever they live, they become the professionals, the entrepreneurs, and the leaders this country needs. That investment is, for this government, a national priority.

It is also a nation of forests, coral reefs, mangroves, and mountain ecosystems — a living landscape inseparable from the economy we are building. A forest standing feeds rivers. A reef protected feeds communities and drives tourism. Our vast maritime territory and rich waters open the door to a blue economy — sustainable fisheries, coastal tourism, and marine conservation — that is already present, waiting to be developed with care and with the right institutions to protect it. These are not environmental concerns separate from development. They are the connective tissue of a diversified, resilient economy.

And the digital state ties it all together — not as a modernisation exercise, but as an act of inclusion. Whether a mother in Lospalos can register her newborn without a four-hour journey, whether no vulnerable family falls through the cracks — that is the measure of a state that truly serves its people.

None of this is possible without peace, without security, without justice, without democracy, and without the conviction that a nation’s greatest wealth is not in the ground or in a fund — it is in its people. That is what we owe to the next generation.

*[Slide 28 — Strategic Opportunities]*

## **VI. WHERE WE ARE HEADED**

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And on the world stage, our engagement is deepening. In a world reshaped by geopolitical shifts and regional realignments, small nations cannot afford to stand still. They must be present, prepared, and heard. Our voice — in the region and in the world — is being heard with increasing confidence. Because the best guarantee of our sovereignty and prosperity is the strength of our institutions and the quality of our relationships.

## **VII. CLOSING — A NATION BUILDING ITSELF**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The institutions we are building today are not for us. They are for those who come after us — for the generation learning to read in Ermera, in Oecusse, in Lospalos. For the young woman who dreams of becoming a judge, a diplomat, a community leader.

We build so that, when that generation takes its place at the table of nations, the table will be ready — the institutions strong, the laws just, the forests protected, and the voice of Timor-Leste heard clearly, in ASEAN and in the world.

That is the work of this sector. That is the work of this government. And that is the commitment we bring to this room today.

**Muito obrigado! Obrigado barak! Thank you.**

*— End of Speech —*