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Statement by the Hon. José Ramos-Horta

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1996)

Senior Minister

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

of Timor-Leste

at the 60<sup>th</sup> session

of the United Nations General Assembly

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M le President,

Tout d'abord permettez-moi de vous féliciter de votre élection pour diriger les travaux de cette session historique de l'Assemblée Générale.

D'autre part j'aimerais féliciter notre président sortant, notre très estimé ami, Son Excellence, monsieur Jean Ping pour ses efforts, sa sagesse et son savoir faire durant sa présidence de la 59ème Session de l'Assemblée Générale.

Sous la pression croissante des dernières semaines menant au sommet, il a agi avec beaucoup de tact et de dextérité, les multiples différences et aboutissant à un document consensuel.

Ce document n'est certes pas à la hauteur de nos espoirs mais nous devons progresser pas à pas. Dieu soit loué pour ces petites victoires, nous permettant de rester concentré sur nos objectifs principaux.

#### Hurricane Katrina

Timor-Leste's President, Prime Minister and people have conveyed to the United States leaders and people our profound sympathy to the peoples of the Gulf States victims of hurricane Katrina particularly from New Orleans.

President George W Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice spoke touching words of gratitude in recognition of the outpouring of sympathy from so many nations.

We must also remember that the United States Administration and people were among the first and most generous to respond to the tsunami tragedy that befell the peoples bordering the Indian Ocean on 26<sup>th</sup> December last year.

#### Developments in Timor-Leste

Mr. President,

Only a little over three years ago the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan handed over power to our elected President. Since then, we have made real progress in nation-building, peace-consolidation, economic development, national reconciliation, and enhancing relations with our neighbours.

Timor-Leste acceded to the seven core International Human Rights instruments and my government is committed to fulfill our concomitant obligations. We are among the first in the world to pioneer a streamlined treaty reporting procedure. We are currently drafting our first reports and all government agencies are participating in this exercise.

The internal political and security situation is peaceful and stable and this includes our porous common land borders.

In record time we reached agreement on ninety-six per cent of our common land border with our closest neighbor, the Republic of Indonesia. By the end of the year we should close the gap. Earlier this year, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono paid a State visit to Timor-Leste. Thousands of people poured into the streets to welcome the elected leader of Indonesia.

Commenting on the general situation of peace and stability in my country, a recent World Bank report stated:

"... many countries emerging from violence, relapse into violence again within five (5) years, but... Timor-Leste has avoided that fate, maintained peace and political stability, and established security." (World Bank Report No. 32700-TP August 8, 2005]

Our economy is doing better than anticipated when the United Nations down-sized its presence in 2002. We are confident that in two to three years we will experience strong economic growth resulting from oil and gas revenues.

As a result of the unexpected high price of oil and gas, Timor-Leste enjoys a surplus, enabling our government to increase our public expenditure by thirty per cent this fiscal year. This increase will benefit mostly the rural population and the poorest.

We are proud to report that thirty-six per cent of our national budget is allocated to education and health.

Malaria and TB is widespread and food insecurity continues to be problematic. The HIV/Aids infection rate is relatively low at 0.6 per cent. With the assistance from Brazil and Thailand our health authorities are addressing the HIV/Aids problem through education on prevention measures and treatment regimes.

With our neighbors we have fostered the best possible relationships. At the end of July we have become the 25<sup>th</sup> member of the ASEAN Regional Forum; our next goal is ASEAN membership. We enjoy Special Observer Status in the Pacific Islands Forum and have fraternal relations with our Melanesian brothers and sisters in the region.

Without the active involvement of our regional and international friends, the leadership and coordinating role of the United Nations, the engagement of its many agencies, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions and the Asian Development Bank, we would not have been able to achieve the impressive progress this far.

#### Truth and Reconciliation

Mr. President,

I shall now address the issue of justice. In an effort to uncover the truth of the events of 1999, the Governments of Timor-Leste and Indonesia have established a joint Commission on Truth and Friendship.

The Commission is mandated to examine serious acts of violence that occurred in the period immediately before, during and after the 30<sup>th</sup> August 1999 United Nations sponsored Popular Consultation where the impacts on our societies are such that the public has the right to know the truth.

We are accused in some quarters of being too preoccupied with forging close relations with Indonesia to the detriment of justice for past abuses and in so doing encouraging impunity.

To our accusers we say the following. We are mindful of the need to accord dignity and respect to the victims of past abuses and we believe that in the pursuit of justice we must be sensitive to the need to establish a balance between comprehensive justice and national reconciliation in order to avoid perpetuating the divisions of the past and risk exacerbating existing cleavages in our society.

We are cognisant that, for Timor-Leste, justice and accountability do not fall exclusively within our national jurisdiction.

While it might be "politically correct" to pursue justice at any cost, ignoring the political reality in our immediate neighbourhood where the elected leaders have shown that they are genuinely committed to pursue a prudent reform path would amount to irresponsible demagoguery.

Mr. President.

We believe that as a responsible member of the international community our first obligation is to build a peaceful, stable, democratic and prosperous country. By consolidating nation-building,

internal peace and stability, unshackling our people from poverty, we can contribute to wider peace and stability.

We owe it to our people to make every effort to build our country based on respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law. But we owe it also to the international community and accept that when it comes to upholding human rights there cannot be claims of state sovereignty and domestic jurisdiction.

If you were to read the World Bank Report on the developments in my country, cited above, you would reach the same upbeat conclusion about the impressive gains we have attained in only three years. Let me share with you some additional findings.

"Timor-Leste, the world's newest nation, was created out of ashes. Given that the country started from scratch both physically and institutionally, Timor-Leste has done remarkably well. (WB Report No, 32700-TP August 8, 2005)

We have developed a model Petroleum Fund legal and policy regime which we took directly to the people, before the National Parliament approved it. We do not want Timor-Leste to fall prey to the developing nations "resource curse" where God-given resources are squandered by elites.

The key principle is that only the sustainable income from our petroleum wealth will be available for current expenditure. Commenting on our Petroleum Fund, the World Bank said:

Timor-Leste "...has adopted a state-of-the-art legal framework for on and off shore petroleum production and taxations and a draft savings policy and associated Petroleum Fund Act consistent with the Extractive Industries Transparency principles even before E/TI existed ... True to stated principles, the Government has adhered to a provisional savings policy for petroleum revenues ahead of the adoption of the permanent savings policy." World Bank Report No. 32700-TP August 8, 2005)

#### United Nations Reform

Allow me now to touch on the theme of United Nations reform. As we observe the current news coverage surrounding the Oil for Food scandal with the United Nations painted as the villain, we are certainly disappointed that the Organization we idealise is tainted by findings of corruption.

In peace-keeping and conflict prevention, we must remember that while the Secretary-General has the responsibility to alert the Security Council to on-going conflict or a potential one that may threaten international peace and security, the ultimate decision to act rests with the Security Council, in particular the Permanent Five members.

The United Nation's role in the world has not however been limited to peace-keeping; it has provided facilities and the environment for informal meetings between parties in conflict; it has mediated hostage situations or border disputes; it has mobilized resources and coordinated assistance to war-torn countries or to communities affected by natural disasters.

The United Nations has brought cure, food, and hope to millions of human beings; it has made possible the awareness world-wide of, and respect for, human rights.

While we all agree that our collective organization has at times failed at the highest levels, the shortcomings and failures should not obscure the virtues and successes of our organization.

The United Nations can also become more effective if regional bodies do their share in addressing the challenges in their respective regions.

Much has been said and written about the need for a thorough review of the United Nations system and much of the debate has been focused on the Security Council, overshadowing all other issues, namely the much needed reform of the General Assembly itself.

Reform is also urgent in regard to the existing human rights system. The proliferation of treaty bodies and agenda items results in a morass of duplication, waste, inefficiency and loss of focus.

### The General Assembly

The General Assembly remains the prime United Nations organ bringing together all nations, rich and poor, large and small.

The endless and repetitive yearly "general debate" and agenda must be reviewed to shorten it and make it more focused.

### Commission on Human Rights

Selectivity has not been a monopoly of a country or group. We have all been good practitioners, focusing our attention on issues usually remote from our shores or that do not collide with friendships, alliances and interests.

Timor-Leste fully endorses the establishment of a Human Rights Council and is prepared to serve in it if we are asked.

### Peace Building Commission

Timor-Leste strongly supports the creation of a Peace Building Commission that would play a critical role in post-conflict situations. The merits are sui generis. In view of our unique rich experience, Timor-Leste would be pleased to serve in this new body if our friends believe we can be useful.

### ECOSOC

There is resounding agreement that ECOSOC must be reformed. It seems to duplicate or add little value to its twenty-six subsidiary bodies. We do not believe in expanding ECOSOC's mandate into managing the United Nation's post-conflict activities.

### The Security Council

A permanent member of the Security Council should not limit its contribution to peace keeping with eloquent rhetoric and yet refrain from sending in the troops necessary to back up its words, if the situation is critical enough to demand it. We are all capable of delivering eloquent speeches with apparent moral force, but we do not all have the same political will, moral courage and raw power to match our words.

Aspiring Security Council members, permanent and non-permanent, should be countries with stable and open political systems, with effective credible national leaderships that inspire trust and respect in their respective regions and internationally.

My Government holds the view that regional balance remains a sine quo non principle and equally so should civilisational representation. Asia which contains half of the world's population is grossly under represented in the United Nations system and will remain so even with the possible addition of India and Japan.

Timor-Leste supports the "G4" initiative because it believes that the four countries concerned fulfill every reasonable and conceivable qualifying criterion for permanent membership in the Security Council.

### Islamic representation

Timor-Leste with an overwhelming Catholic majority population is proud to have been the first country to draw the attention of this august body to the need to insure that the Muslim world be adequately represented. We continue to believe that Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim

country, with the third largest population in our region, and the third largest Asian democracy, is uniquely suited for Permanent Member Status.

### Japan and Neighbors

Timor-Leste understands the reservations of certain countries who do not wish to see a too large Security Council; we understand the reluctance of some of the current Permanent Five to abandon or share the veto privileges with new ones.

We understand that countries that were invaded and colonized by Japan during World War II are not receptive to their former aggressor. Timor-Leste too was occupied by Japan during World War II.

But we also remember how the proud Japanese people were made to pay an extraordinary price for their World War II sins. Hiroshima stands as the living reminder of this horrible price.

Japanese leaders (like Nazi German leaders) were brought to trial at the Tokyo Military Tribunal and paid for their crimes. A defeated Japan was effectively occupied and administered by the victorious American power. This benign occupier chartered the course of the new Japan that is today a world economic power, a peaceful and vibrant democracy, that has made enormous contributions to the well-being of developing countries and the United Nations system.

Allow me now to share with this august Assembly my Government's concern on a number of international issues.

### Middle East, Afghanistan, Iraq

First, we commend Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for his dogged determination and courage in disengaging from Gaza. We hope that this is only a first step towards the full implementation of the "Road Map" leading to the establishment of a democratic Palestinian State. The new Palestinian leaders and people deserve equal praise for their moderation and statesmanship, patience and tolerance.

In Iraq and Afghanistan, local extremist elements and foreign mercenaries continue their campaign of terror to reverse the democratic gains made by the people of the two countries. The international community and in particular the neighboring countries have a special duty to provide all necessary support to the brave peoples of Afghanistan and Iraq in their struggle to consolidate their hard-won freedoms; they must do more to prevent their territories from being used as a springboard for the infiltration of mercenaries and weapons into Afghanistan and Iraq.

### Western Sahara

Last but not least and before we conclude, I wish to draw *the* attention of the international community to the seeming deadlock over the conflict in Western Sahara.

We must not by inaction condemn the people of that former Spanish territory to languish in refugee camps away from home. We must also commend the leaders of the Polisario Front for their wisdom and magnanimity in releasing all remaining Moroccan prisoners of war who were held by the Front in some cases for as long as thirty years, the length of the occupation..

May God The Almighty and the Merciful Bless You All.