

To be delivered at 10am in Laga, Sunday 25th February 2007

Speech by José Ramos-Horta on the announcement of his candidacy to the Presidency of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have dedicated my whole life for Timor-Leste. For more than twenty five years, I have spread the Timorese cause, bit by bit all over the world. I told our history, explained our identity, and demonstrated that we deserved to be independent; to be a sovereign country.

The Timorese people and the international community know me and I know well my well loved land, from end to the other.

After independence in the transition period, I traveled the country helping to explain to the people about the new situation and about the UNTAET mandate and I helped to mobilise the people to participate in the electoral processes of 2001 and 2002.

I helped to establish dialogue in several areas in our nation where some groups were in discord. I bridged the gulf separating FALINTIL and Commander L-7.

I never sought to be a candidate for a position of power.

I accepted the invitation made to me by the winning party of the 2001 elections for the portfolio of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. This was my job. I helped to build a modest but active Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I continued my work of twenty-four years, projecting and promoting Timor-Leste to the world.

I led the process of establishing diplomatic relations with more than 100 countries, and together with my team, I ensured that Timor-Leste was accepted into membership of the ASEAN Regional Forum, achieved observer status in the Pacific Forum, and integrated into the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

We consolidated relations with our Asian neighbors. Timor-Leste relations with Indonesia, the other ASEAN countries, Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, The Republic of Korea, India, are today on a solid base. We have continued our friendly relations with many countries of Europe, and with the European Commission, the United States, and especially the countries of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP).

In the matter of foreign policy I have been always inspired by the best interests of our country and by a sense of realism, consolidating existing friendly relations and at the same time trying to enlarge our relations independently of the political regime of each country. An example of this are the excellent relations we have with the United States of America and Cuba, two countries who have had a difficult relations for over half a century, with vastly different regimes, dimensions and resources.

During May, June, July and August 2006, the worst months of crisis, I was with the people. During the night of the 28th April I was with the first Internally Displaced Persons (IDP's) at the airport area. I traveled the streets of Dili day and night. I visited many suburbs. During the most difficult days in which our sons and daughters in F-FDTL (Timor-Leste Defence Force) and PNTL (Timor-Leste Police Force) were injured and in hospital, I visited them. I also visited many districts-Alieu, Same, Alas, Maubisse, Gleno, Emera, Lete'Foho, Atsabe, Maliana, Liquica, Suai, Oecussi, Manatuto, Lakluba, Soibada, Baucau, Laga, Los Palos, and Lore. I went to many isolated villages. I visited all police posts on the border. I spoke with men, women and children. I spoke with youth, street vendors, and fishermen. I spoke with gang members and martial arts members. I spoke with our police officers and soldiers. I spoke with our much respected Bishops, Priests and Nuns. I spoke with non-government organisations, political parties, and the business community.

I visited Malaysia and Australia, two of the four countries that promptly responded to our appeal for help, when the crisis was at its peak. The other two countries Portugal and New Zealand, I hope to visit as soon as possible, to personally thank them for their enormous contribution. I also visited Indonesia. I went to the Vatican and had an audience with His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. I addressed the Security Council in New York.

I was drafted for the position of Prime Minister as a result of the serious political crisis that shook our country, and I accepted this most thankless and difficult task. I didn't want to be Prime Minister for five years, and I wanted it even less for ten months, but our country was in crisis and our institutions were on the way to disintegration. Our people were suffering. For that and only for that I accepted the position of Prime Minister for ten months.

I did not want to be Prime Minister in 2002, when the situation was easier. I could have in 2002 entered the race for power. I did not do it. I wanted neither power nor glory.

The April and May 2006 crisis showed us that our young state had not yet reached a level of sufficient maturity, to enable us alone to deal with all the challenges.

We asked for help with the international community, especially to our close neighbours and friends and to the United Nations. Their help was and will continue to be essential to Timor-Leste.

However, the responsibility to fight for our country continues to be ours, of the Timorese. We gained independence, today we are a sovereign state, recognised by the international community, but internally we still have to walk a long way to achieve what we all dreamed of for our country; prosperity, security, stability, development, equality of rights and opportunity, social harmony and peace. We laid down the arms after the fight against the occupation, but now our fight is for our future. In this new fight each Timorese citizen has the responsibility to serve their country, and whenever you are

asked to serve you have to consider if you can serve in a way that will be in keeping with the requisite challenges required to develop our country.

Lately I have been asked from all levels of society, to present myself as a candidate for the upcoming Presidential elections.

I know that I have the capacities and capabilities to assume the position of President of the Republic. Therefore I am available to assume my responsibility to my country.

I announce today, publicly in Laga, my decision to be a candidate to the Presidency of the Republic, to succeed Xanana Gusmao, hero-son of our people, who were rescued from the great defeats of 1977 and 1979, when he led us with extraordinary vision until our liberation.

There were weeks of reflection and much hesitation. I reflected on both the honour and the challenge to be a candidate for the Head of State.

In the terms of our constitution it says, “The President of the Republic is the Head of State, symbol and guarantor of national independence, and unity of the state and of the smooth functioning of the democratic institutions.”

While guarantor of the regular functioning of the institutions, the President must assume a role of interconnection and harmonisation between the several institutions of state, to foster an enabling environment so that they can work as one.

The dialogue between institutions is essential and I intend to encourage it; as a country in which several institutions are dysfunctional, is a country that cannot develop.

During the entire crisis period, until today, I always looked to dialogue. I did this because I know that only through dialogue can we find the best solutions for our country and for our future. I did this because I consider the only way to reach a just decision is through listening to all parties.

As such I always tried to encourage dialogue between others, with the clear conscience that only this way I can contribute to the strengthening of our democracy and social stability.

So I can say that I will continue if elected President to continue this same approach of institutional harmonisation, because I know that only this way we will manage to guarantee national independence and state unity.

This is one of the ways through which we will manage to rebuild a state that was severely shocked by the 2006 crisis and the aftereffects of the ensuing instability.

I am about to complete my mandate as Prime Minister. I will adhere to what the law demands, and as a candidate during the period of the electoral campaign, I will take

temporary leave from the Office of Prime Minister. I will not use government property for my campaign. As a candidate I am a common citizen and I have no right to use state resources outside the official functions that I exercise. I will rigorously observe this principle.

I came to Laga in a private vehicle. I never used state vehicles for activities not linked to my state functions, as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Minister for Defence and Prime Minister. I will not do it now.

I invite the State Inspector General, political parties and other institutions to monitor my activities.

The Government over which I preside is a Government of Fretilin, the majority party of the parliamentary elections. I always try to respect the majority party, having in mind that being a non-elected Prime Minister with less than a one year mandate, borne out of a crisis; I would have many limitations notably time and power.

I cooperated loyally with the party in power and with my government colleagues. I share with my colleagues the small victories registered during my short term in office much of what we achieved is the result of the experience and dedication that they demonstrated. With humility I assume responsibility for the failures and for them I apologise to you and all of our long suffering and dignified people.

During the electoral period I will present to the people my national and international vision and my ideas.

Until then I will continue to serve the country in the positions I currently occupy.

May God, the Almighty and the Merciful bless you all.