**SPEECH BY H.E. PRESIDENT TAUR MATAN RUAK  ON THE OCCASION OF THE 13TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE**

**RESTORATION OF INDEPENDENCE**

**Maliana, 20 May 2015**

(see <http://timor-leste.gov.tl/?p=12070&lang=en> for a description of the celebration.)

Excellencies.  People of Timor-Leste:

We celebrate, in Maliana, the 13th Anniversary of the Restoration of the Independence. I salute the Most Reverend Bishop Norberto do Amaral and all religious men and women from the Diocese of Maliana and across Timor-Leste.

This year of 2015 evokes our Nation's history in a special way. This year, we celebrate 500 years since first contact with the Portuguese. That encounter was followed by contacts with missionaries. Those events, five centuries ago, helped to write the history of our land.

We celebrate these first encounters at a time when Timor-Leste has the honour of presiding over the CPLP, the Community of Portuguese-Language Countries. These are two realities that symbolise aspects of the Timorese identity: Christianity and the Portuguese Language - the language adopted by the Resistance, because it set us apart and, therefore, contributed to our national liberation.

Christianity is an inspiring force for the spirituality of the Timorese people. The work of the Church and of the religious men and women must become an example of the qualities of the Timorese people, in the service of good and of vulnerable people across the country. We are an Asian, Christian nation, with strong links to several sister nations in other continents.

In addition to the language, we share values and a long history with our sister nations of the CPLP. The fraternal solidarity of the peoples of the CPLP, during 24 years, was extremely important in the struggle for Independence. At present, the country's harmonious integration in the international community is also very important to consolidate the State and develop Timor-Leste. As an Asian Nation, we want to further our participation in the life of our region. The future accession to the ASEAN is a step towards this objective.

The municipality of Bobonaro includes a vast section of our international border. The people of Bobonaro know the importance of stability and peace for commerce and for the development of the economy. The policy of friendship and reconciliation between Timor-Leste and Indonesia - and the cooperation between our countries, as well as with Australia - constitute powerful contributions to stability, development and the strengthening of regional economy.

In April, I met Indonesian President Joko Widodo. He and I agreed to immediately give a renewed boost to the negotiation of the borders between Timor-Leste and Indonesia, especially the sea border. The land border is 98% established. This provides security to the communities on both sides and contributes to the development of family connections and commercial relations.

The security of the people and the expansion of commerce are beneficial to the economy of Maliana and of the municipality of Bobonaro.

With regard to Australia, Timor-Leste has also proposed the start of negotiations for the definition of our shared sea border. We continue to wait for an answer to our proposal.

Timor-Leste sees the development of the country as a process that must bring advantages to all parties involved. Development should generate new opportunities for commerce and cooperation with neighbouring regions, like Darwin and Northern Australia and the nearest Indonesian provinces.

Most of the direct jobs generated by our economy continue to be created in Dili. The development process must rapidly contribute towards promoting job creation in other regions of the country.

The tripartite cooperation, which we hope to expand, between Timor-Leste, Indonesia and Australia, is going to stimulate economic growth in a extremely vast region that includes Oecusse, Ataúro, Bobonaro, Covalima and neighbouring territories. We believe in mutually beneficial cooperation to create well-being for our communities and for the communities of neighbouring regions. This process shows us the importance of international relations to the consolidation of the State and the development of the country.

Today, I decorated people and international organisations who stood out for their committed and reliable support to our struggle. Some of them could not travel here for medical reasons.

We honoured 35 friends today, whose contribution towards victory and towards the Restoration of the Independence was important. They come from many countries: In the Asia-Pacific - from Australia, Indonesia, Japan, New Zealand and the Philippines; from Vanuatu, we posthumously honour the memory of a friend of our people.

In the Portuguese-speaking world, we honour activists and journalists from Portugal, as well as the PALOP, the organisation Portuguese-speaking African countries. These sister nations provided unfailing support to our struggle, especially Angola and Mozambique, but also Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Cape Verde.

I want to express my satisfaction for decorating the Most Reverend Manuel Martins, Bishop Emeritus of Setúbal. He fought his entire life for justice, in Setúbal, Portugal, and the world. His support and love for Timor-Leste, I cherish it in my heart. From the American continent, we acknowledge the solidarity and militant support of Members of Congress, activists and civil society organisations in the United States and Canada.

Civil society in Canada, the United States, and also many officials elected by the American people were influential and active throughout the 24 years of struggle. I send a heartfelt embrace to all our friends. First of all, to Professor Noam Chomsky, for his extraordinary leadership and inspiring example of respect for civil rights and for Human Rights, in the United States and around the world, for the past six decades or more. His support to Timor-Leste continues as unfailing today as was his denouncement of the occupation.

In Europe, Ireland has always had a strong movement of solidarity with the Timorese Resistance. The solidarity of the Europeans was strong in other countries as well, and was acknowledged with decorations on other occasions. Brave journalists, from Portugal and other countries, introduced to the world the Timorese Resistance and the violation of Human Rights in our land. Freedom of the press around the world has helped promote the solidarity of other peoples with the struggle of the Timorese!

I send an embrace to our brother Max Stahl, to whom I wish a speedy recovery. Many friends of Timor-Leste organized and led networks of support to the Resistance within their countries' civil societies. They helped collect financial and other types of material support, and mobilized the international public opinion against the occupation of Timor.

I believe that everyone will understand and support me in highlighting, in particular, Indonesian activist Liem Soei Liong, historic leader of TAPOL, an organisation that promotes Human Rights in Indonesia. TAPOL was always amongst the fearless voices speaking out against the oppression of the Timorese people.

The Resistance's diplomatic efforts and international solidarity contributed to isolate the Suharto regime and focus the attention of world leaders in Timor. Our diplomats, steered by the Timorese Resistance national leaders, helped realise the Timorese vision for the 1999 referendum.

I embrace the brothers and sisters of the Diplomatic Front who, for 24 years, believed in our victory and never forgot about the suffering of the people in the country. I especially embrace the father of our diplomacy, my brother Ramos-Horta. His capacity has been recognised by the United Nations, which has entrusted him with high-responsibility missions, and he continues to honour the name of Timor around the world. The Resistance's diplomacy amplified the action of the Armed Front and of the Clandestine Front, increasing its national and international impact.

Now, the ambassadors of Timor-Leste and all our diplomats must develop a proactive diplomacy, drawing inspiration from the lessons of the Resistance. The Timorese diplomacy must show the world our country's stability, our people's successes, and the opportunities of investment in projects that are mutually beneficial for both the investors and our country's development.

The international borders of Timor-Leste are spaces of understanding, friendship and cooperation. Our country is a stable and predictable partner, capable of inspiring confidence, in the region and in the world.

Brothers and sisters.  Without stability there is no development. Peace, security of people and properties, confidence in Justice and respect for the law are indispensable to attract investment and promote development. If the Timorese people are not united, others will take advantage of our weakness, impacting national sovereignty. We must be united and strengthen our stability, to implement our development strategy and out-manoeuvre those who wish us harm.

In today's global world, economic results depend on internal development as well as on the success in international competition. Therefore, Timor-Leste works to turn economic and entrepreneurial cooperation into a new line of action for the CPLP, not only in this biennium, but for the future. In a certain way, the borders of Timor-Leste are vaster and extend to other continents, where the sister nations of the CPLP are located. No country succeeds alone. International confidence and respect are important for our development.

During the struggle, the support of our people to the combatants, the credibility and the international respect for the Resistance were built, step by step:

- with moderate and inclusive policies, approved by the Resistance's central leadership, in the mountains;

- and with diligent and credible diplomacy, which helped the world to know us and to believe in the Timorese people.

Now, the international credibility and respect for the country continue to be built, also step by step, every day:

- with moderate and inclusive policies by the national leadership to strengthen stability and promote sustainable growth, which will help improve household economy and strengthen the national private sector;

- and with the intensification of an always credible and diligent diplomacy, capable of conveying the stability in which we live and of strengthening the international community's confidence in Timor-Leste.

Our diplomacy is a tool that helps us implement the development priorities that we approved.

The State is making major investments to develop the country. Some results are already evident. One of them is the national electrical grid. The electricity is already arriving to most of the country. In a little more time, it is going to arrive to every suco and village in our land. We are investing in the construction and improvement of a national road network. Some important works will be carried out in partnership between Timor-Leste and institutions from the international community or from development partners.

This solution began being implemented by previous governments. My wish is that the experience of these partnerships results in greater quality of the works and increased swiftness in their implementation. The partnerships for implementation of infrastructure enrich the experience and capacity of achievement of the Public Works and procurement services of the State. We should always learn in order to do more and better.

At the moment, the State is making large investments in two development hubs in Oecusse and in the Southern Coast. The objective is to stimulate the use of the wealth and work of the communities in these regions and attract investors to develop the productive sector and create more jobs. These hubs should become engines of regional economic growth to stimulate not only the economy of Timor-Leste but also trade relations with the neighbouring regions of Australia and Indonesia, with advantages for all involved parties. We must progress as quickly as possible and create more centres of economic dynamism in other regions.

Only by investing in development hubs can we take advantage of the resources of our land and the work of our farmers. It is important that we plan to protect and expand the farming areas. We cannot continue to import almost everything we eat or drink. We are going to work together to ensure the sustainable development of all regions of Timor-Leste and to take advantage of the natural wealth of our land.  The State must improve the quality of the services and reduce bureaucracy.  The majority of the population live outside the capital city, but Public Administration is still primarily in Dili. The State must bring public services closer to the population – to the entire country.

The participation and involvement of citizens in national development needs to become a priority and a work method of the Public Administration. The best way for the State to be efficient at the local level is to promote the participation of the interested populations, share with the communities the responsibility for the implementation of local projects and priorities.

They know better than anyone else what they need.

Excellencies. Brothers and sisters.

Today marks the third anniversary of the day when I was sworn in as President of the Republic. The country has not been standing still. Living conditions have improved in some villages. But the needs continue to be plenty. We must work with determination to improve living conditions in all the villages and hamlets of our land.

These last few years have seen peace and stability. Stability is possible because the people chose peace and have been behaving responsibly towards the present and the future. We have a new Government and a new Prime Minister. The handover of greater responsibilities from the generation of 1975 to the generation of Santa Cruz has happened peacefully and smoothly.

This reality is positive and welcome. There is a broad consensus regarding the need of increasing rigour and quality in the public services, reducing waste and spending the State's money conscientiously and with care – and of the need to decentralise and correct departmental structure whenever performance is deemed unsatisfactory.

The Government members ought to be the first to set an example. This duty is not exclusive of the Government members, though. It is the duty of every citizen, including the President of the Republic. Our land of Timor needs the commitment from all of us. The workers, all the citizens, care about their situation and that of their families. This is normal, but it can’t be all there is: we must also think about the country. We must think about the interests of the country, not just the interests of the individual to develop and improve the lives of all in our beloved land. Only unity and dedication to Timor will allow us to attain a better life in a better country.

Together, we can do better. May God help and bless us all.