Brief Remarks
by
H.E. Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
Mrs. Adaljiza Magno

on the occasion of the Official Dinner on the Margin of the Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Restoration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

Wednesday 18th, 2022

Excellencies Ambassadors, Heads of Missions,
Excellency Secretary General,
Excellencies Director Generals of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to begin by welcoming this very timely meeting of the Ambassadors, the heads of missions, accredited to the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. Taking this opportunity, I also would like to express my profound gratitude for your presence here today as a perfect proof of your continued sympathy and solidarity with the people of Timor-Leste. It was under such a wave of sympathy and solidarity that Timor-Leste emerged as the youngest nation of the third millennium. It is always gratifying for us to know that the commitment for Timor-Leste is still ongoing and your presence today is a perfect proof.

Since I took office in late June 2020 as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, I have not yet had the opportunity to meet with all heads of foreign missions, especially the non-resident ones. In the last two years, due to the constraints imposed by Covid-19, especially the consecutive declarations of state of emergency as

preventive measures to put a stop to the spread of Covid-19 in our country, it has been difficult for us to meet physically in person.

So, it is with profound satisfaction that I host this dinner on the sideline of the Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Restoration of our Independence and expecting that it might become a valuable opportunity for all of us to share and exchange views on various aspects of our bilateral relations as well as at the level of multilateralism in dealing with issues of our common concerns, in a constantly changing world of today. Since we are all following closely the unfolding of every geopolitical and security situation around the globe and especially in our region of Asia and Pacific, I refrain myself from making any comments or assessment but rather expressing Timor-Leste's disquiets or apprehensions regarding WARS – any war or any army conflict- including the war in Ukraine.

Based on our own experiences as a nation that came back from the ashes of forced occupation, I can assertively affirm that wars bring benefits to no one but merely lead to destructions, sufferings and deaths, for both the invader and the invaded. Timor-Leste, therefore, urges all parties that are involved in the conflict to agree to an immediate ceasefire and pursue a diplomatic solution and seek peaceful resolution to the conflict in line with the international law. I

would like to reiterate here that the traditional position of Timor-Leste which has been advocated since the restoration of national independence, 20 years ago, is the peaceful resolution of conflicts at international level, in compliance with the United Nations Charter, Human Rights and International Law, as the best way to ensure the collective security of States and peace in the international system.

Furthermore, as a small country, Timor-Leste is also very concern about the security environment generated by the competing powers in our region of Asia-Pacific. The constant tension in south China Sea and in the strait of Taiwan, disputes over maritime borders that involve a number of countries in the region and also, organizations of transnational crimes (such as narcotraffic, human traffic, illegal fishing, money laundry, etc.), as well as extreme poverty, ethnic and religious conflicts, large-scale of emigration in search of a decent life, degradation of the environment and global natural calamities as well as the pandemic diseases (COVID-19) that spread across geographic boundaries are some of the biggest challenges facing the world in general and, especially, in our region of Asia and Pacific.

By exposing the security environment this way, I can point out that there are both collective security threats and each individual country's internal security threats. Both collective and internal

security threats will always have negative impacts on Timor-Leste in particular and on the countries in the region in general. Any outburst of army conflict between two or more countries will, certainly, affect the security and stability in the whole region and any domestic instability or political turmoil and violence in certain country will have negative effects on the security in the whole region of Asia and Pacific as well. (I don't need to give examples because we all are aware of this kind of situation in our region).

In Timor-Leste's perspective, to address the above-mentioned collective security threats, diplomacy and political dialogue should always be the essential tool to reach peace and security in the region. In today's world, as modern and civilized nations, constructive and genuine dialogue should always be indispensable options in our efforts of searching for long and lasting solutions to any divergence or conflict that might take place between nations in the region. Dialogue should prevail over military options.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In less than 48 hours, Timor-Leste is going to commemorate its 20th Anniversary of the Restauration of its Independence that was proclaimed on November 28th, 1974. We are going to celebrate our special day in the history of our nation. Special because it was on

this day, May 20th, 2002, that the people of Timor-Leste reached and entered the gate of freedom to regain its dignity as people and nation, recognized by the international community. It was the day when everything began to unfold, the day when the first steps were taken, as an independent and sovereign country, towards a better future, a future that really belongs to every Timorese people.

In every five years, the swearing in ceremony of the newly elected president also coincides with the celebration of the day of the restoration of independence. We have conducted Presidential election, this year, and Mr. Ramos-Horta has been elected as President of the Republic for the period of 2022 to 2027. The swearing-in ceremony is going to take place around mid-night of May 19th, in Tasi-Tolu, Dili.

The celebration of the twentieth anniversary of independence, this year, has a high significance in the journey of Timor-Leste as it moves from the state of an adolescent country to a new stage of life. Timor-Leste, then, is ready to take its place in the community of nations, to learn and to share from its resources and unique experience. Rising from ashes of war, Timor-Leste possesses firsthand experience effective peace-building as a precursor to nation-building and development. Timor-Leste has been sharing these experiences with a group of post conflict countries, known as

g7+ that has gained the Observer status in the UN as well as in the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP).

To be geographically situated in Southeast Asia at this time, in the midst of such a vibrant region of innovation and commerce, brings many opportunities as well as challenges - opportunities to leverage upon the expertise and capital resources in the region, and the challenge to rapidly upgrade Timor-Leste's human and infrastructure capacity, to become competitive in the marketplace, and to carve a niche for itself in the world.

Timor-Leste has to adapt itself constantly with the advance and changes in the Global System and is fully aware that its future depends on its creative efforts of successfully assuring its regional integration and actively fostering friendly and productive relations with all countries in the world. Without international connectivity, Timor-Leste simply cannot progress and prosper.

Driven by this viewpoint, Timor-Leste submitted its formal request of ASEAN membership in March, 2011, as part of pursuing vigorously its objectives of reintegrating itself in the society of nations by being an integral part of this community of nations (ASEAN) that now constitutes one of the most dynamic, peaceful, secure, and prosperous region in this part of the globe.

Hence, joining ASEAN is not intended to seek financial assistance from ASEAN members but to assure Timor-Leste's long-standing determination to join the organization as part of the process of fully reintegrating itself in the community of nations as well as for the sake of its own security and stability, apart from the expansion of opportunities for trade and economic cooperation with ASEAN members.

Additionally, by joining ASEAN, Timor-Leste is determined to encourage and reinforce the development of democracy, human rights, the promotion of economic prosperity, social progress and cultural interconnection as well as to enable favorable conditions for open and genuine dialogue between ASEAN members to bring solutions to various common problems and to assure security, stability and peaceful coexistence. Timor-Leste's national security and stability will be best served when it integrates itself successfully in ASEAN but it is also in the interest of ASEAN, from the stand point of security and stability, that Timor-Leste be part of that regional organization. Timor-Leste believes in the vital importance of a strong, independent and united ASEAN for the security and prosperity of the region, and looks forward to contributing to the continued success of this family of nations.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

After stepping out from the stage of a teenager country, Timor-Leste has grown and consolidated itself as a country firmly committed to the promotion and protection of human rights. It is therefore with the confidence that it can serve and contribute to the work of the Human Rights Council that Timor-Leste wishes to apply for membership in the Human Rights Council for the period 2024-2026.

While being aware that Timor-Leste does not have a perfect system just like any country, my Country has a strong commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights values and principles, and to the fundamental role that multilateralism plays in advancing the protection and promotion of human rights.

Thus, should Timor-Leste be elected for the first time as a member of the Human Rights Council, this election would make an important contribution to the work of the Council, as well as corroborate the Council's vision in the diversity of Countries that share the experience and the successful contribution of the work of this body. Therefore, I hope I can count on your support in this candidacy.

Finally, I would like to emphasize Timor-Leste's commitment to **multilateralism**. Based on our experience, we are absolutely certain that any conduct in line with the principle of **multilateralism** is the best way to find enduring solutions for global problems and challenges that confronts us at the international community, through peaceful means such as constructive, open and frank dialogue.

We constantly hear the statements on global problems such as:

- **Global Financial Crisis**
- **Global Terrorism**
- **Global Warming**
- **Global Pandemics**

This is a clear proof that actually we are living in the SAME BOAT. Any problem is a collective problem of the humanity as a whole and we need to collectively bring solutions to our problems through multilateral cooperation.

Timor-Leste has proved its ability to establish friendship ties, partnership and cooperation, both in bilateral and multilateral level based on diversity and mutual respect for the establishment of a better world, a world of peace and harmony, a world of wellbeing for all the humanity. We are member of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) situated, geographically, in Asia, member

State of ASEAN Regional Forum, active member of g7+ States and, as mentioned above, we are working hard to integrate into important regional organization such as ASEAN. Timor-Leste advocates the principles of interdependencies of states and mutual respect in the relationship of nations in which cooperation prevails over competition and collaboration prevails over confrontation. Based on the principles of mutual respect, interdependency, good neighborhood and harmony, Timor-Leste rejects all forms of aggression and oppression.

Our constitution stipulates that Timor-Leste will always have peaceful and friendly relations with all countries in the world. Since independence, we have created strong bonds of friendship between our people and people from around the world. Timor-Leste is particularly pleased to contribute to the pursuit of peace in our region of Asia and Pacific.

Let us all work together for a more peaceful future, for everyone.

I thank you.