



Goodbye Conflict Welcome Development.
Fini le conflit, place au développement.

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TOKYO PARLIAMENTARIAN PEACE FORUM

Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations

**“The Role of the United Nations and Japan in the Post-Corona Era in
Addressing Global Threats and Challenges”**

**Organised by the Parliamentary Committee of the Diet of Japan and
Japan Commission on Global Governance**

Video Presentation

KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO

“Views of the Global South for the United Nations”

**Tokyo, Japan
Wednesday, 18 November 2020
13:00-17:00 hours**

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking you for the honour of being invited to take part in this Peace Forum.

I must praise the Parliamentary Committee of the Diet of Japan and the Japan Commission on Global Governance for their contribution towards international cooperation and peace.

The people of Timor-Leste recall war only too well. We were one of the last countries in Asia to throw off the shackles of colonialism, only to endure 24 years of brutal military occupation. We were forced to take up arms to fight for our freedom and self-determination, and for this we paid a steep price in blood and tears. And so, we understand the cost of war and the importance of peace.

For the Timorese, peace means more than the absence of conflict. It means living with dignity and having access to development opportunities.

What a beautiful dream this is!

For people living in extreme poverty and lacking the ability to realise their dreams – they do not live in peace! For there to be peace they must be free from oppression, inequality, hunger, disease and human suffering.

In Timor-Leste we learned during our first years of independence that there can be no peace without development; and no development without peace.

All over the world we are confronted with this simple truth, and yet it is apparently so difficult for many to grasp: That no one can be safe and live in peace until everyone has access to development!

Like Timor, Japan was reborn from the “ashes”. Japan’s remarkable post-war reconstruction is an inspiration to the world. The Japanese people have a strong sense of community and understand the importance of partnerships; the need to build a strong and cohesive society based on solidarity that can meet the threats and challenges we all face.

Today, more than ever, these values are essential. We are living in a world of disorder. We see international rules and understandings under challenge. And while we witness

the rise of a multipolar world, we see many countries living in conflict and fragility being left behind.

This is why Timor-Leste has been working with a group of 20 fragile countries – the g7+ – so that our collective voices may be heard. The reality of fragile countries must be part of the global discussion on peace and development, to seek a new world order.

Today's challenges are great.

In addition to armed conflicts, the threat of nuclear destruction and climate change, the world is now facing the wrath of COVID-19 – a pandemic that does not respect borders and threatens each and every one of us. It does not care if we are rich or poor, developed or underdeveloped, strong or weak.

This pandemic has lifted the veil that was covering the weaknesses of countries and governments that were not prepared for such a crisis.

Meanwhile, the rise of authoritarianism and increasing inequality are bad omens for world peace.

As with other global threats, the pandemic is not a fight that can be fought by a nation alone, or even by a few nations. It requires a collective effort. It requires solidarity.

While at this time there is a temptation to withdraw within our national borders, to close ourselves within our communities and even within ourselves - where we supposedly feel safe - we must refrain from such short-sightedness. The way the world handles this pandemic will be a generational test for the international community.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, we must acknowledge that this organisation can, and should, play a key role in this difficult period we are all facing. Although the world of today is much different from the one that existed after the Second World War, the need for peace remains.

The UN is not a perfect organisation. Many see it as an idealistic version of international relationships. However, its mere existence is in itself a victory – the victory of a world that is guided by the principles of justice, rather than by might alone.

Without the UN, Timor-Leste might never have restored its independence. It was the solidarity of the International Community that paved the way for our independence and that subsequently ensured peace and stability in our country.

Japan was one of those extraordinary countries that provided financial support and that deployed defence forces to assist in peacekeeping operations in Timor-Leste. This represented an expansion of the Japanese contribution to UN peacekeeping operations.

Since then, Japan has played a vital role in regional and international security, as a true agent of peace – helping to restore balance to a world that is reeling from wars and uncertainty.

Japan's experience with sustainable development is also a template for dealing with the challenges facing humankind. Indeed, I would like to congratulate Japan on its pledge to be carbon neutral by 2050, as this is the most effective approach to global warming.

Japan is one of but a few countries in the world that can take true pride in their economic miracle, their peaceful nature and their culture based upon respect for others and respect for human dignity and the importance of the collective over the individual.

As such, I believe that Japan can play a key role in breathing new life into the efforts to realise the principles of the UN Charter. The world needs the United Nations to be more in tune with the principles that led to its establishment.

In order for the world to be able to face and respond successfully to the threats of the 21st century, it is imperative to reform the UN Security Council, making it more legitimate and effective. Multilateralism is the answer here. However, in order for an international organisation to have credibility, it must be able to respond to the needs of today, rather than close itself around a mechanism that was created to deal with the problems the world was facing 75 years ago.

Consequently, I advocate increasing the number of permanent members in the Security Council to enable greater representativeness. Like in our small group of fragile countries (the g7+), there should be a clear and collective voice that is representative of the realities and perspectives faced by the nations of the 21st century.

The threats we are facing must be met with unique and bold approaches. The weakest and poorest countries – the ones that turmoil affects first – require a message of hope.

As a small country in Southeast Asia, I look forward to seeing Japan, along with China and South Korea, working closer together, alongside with ASEAN, to revive multilateralism and the United Nations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Few people would have imagined that a Timorese like me, who fought a guerrilla war for freedom, would be standing here before you today talking about Timor-Leste as a triumph of the international system.

And yet Timor-Leste is a story of hope.

Recently we turned once again to the international architecture (namely UNCLOS) in order to achieve a peaceful resolution to our maritime boundary dispute with Australia. This followed years during which we sought to reclaim our seas and the resources that belonged to us under international law, only to have Australia reject our fair claims.

At a time when the rule-based international system is in jeopardy, and being tested as never before, it is more important than ever for countries to be able to come together in solidarity.

This means supporting all countries. No one must be left behind. We must ensure that everyone has access to health care and to vaccines, whenever they become available. Any other scenario would lead to divisiveness, inequality, conflict and death.

We must choose peace. And we must do so with courage, dedication and leadership.

I would go as far as to say that a certain idealism is required. We must change the way we think and the way we act, so as to accept difference and diversity and to save the planet and humankind. We must think and act in accordance with the common good, rather than our interests as individuals or as ethnic, political or religious groups.

This is the only way we can fight the pandemic, the climate change, poverty, extremism, terrorism, violence and of any authoritarian tendencies of States that choose the path of police repression against peaceful demonstration of citizens that are demanding for their democratic rights.

I say it again: the UN is not perfect. It requires structural changes. However, the principles are there. And it might just be that the most important crisis we are facing today is a crisis of principles and values.

In times of hardship, let us be guided by our commitment to human solidarity, so that we may ensure a better world – a peaceful world.

Timor-Leste has seen this solidarity before in the birth of our nation. We know it can be done.

And we have seen the solidarity that it required in the relationship between Japan and Timor-Leste.

Japan and Timor-Leste enjoy strong and deep people to people relationships. This can be seen in a host of Japanese NGOs that are working across Timor to improve the lives of our people. It can be seen in youth exchange programs that allow Timorese to travel to Japan and to learn from the Japanese people. And it can be seen through our cultural affinities and the Timorese studying in Japanese educational institutions. Importantly, Japan also

supports us in building the core infrastructure that we need and assists us in providing basic services including health, education, water and sanitation.

Our countries share common values and principles and we know there is so much we can continue to learn from the Japanese people.

On behalf of Timor-Leste, I must pay tribute to the Japanese people, and in particular the Parliamentary Committee of the Diet of Japan, the Japanese Government and civil society and to the academic institutions and Japanese NGOs for their solidarity and support during our struggle for freedom and independence and for their ongoing contribution to our process of State building and nation building.

Thank you very much.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão