

CHANCELLOR,

Nation building is an enormous challenge in any set of circumstances, providing great opportunities for prosperity and development while also presenting seemingly insurmountable difficulties. Nation building is often borne of hardship and sacrifice and years of oppression and struggle, as is clearly the case in the emergence of our nearest neighbour Timor-Leste. As the first President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and now as its Prime Minister, HE Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao has made the great sacrifices and contribution that are the hallmark of leading a new nation.

Since independence only 10 years ago there has been an extraordinary effort on the part of the Timorese people, with the support of the international community, to build a democratic, progressive and modern state. There is much that can be said of how Timor-Leste has grown and transformed since midnight on 19 May 2002 when Xanana Gusmao announced "... we wanted to be ourselves. We wanted to take pride in being ourselves, a people a nation".

We are truly honoured this evening to pay tribute to a world leader who has emerged through personal sacrifice and struggle and to formally acknowledge an individual who now plays a significant leadership role in our region.

Here I highlight only some of the nation-building story of Timor-Leste under the leadership of Xanana Gusmao.

Independence as a nation for Timor-Leste is something that Xanana Gusmao strove to achieve for many decades. He now leads the nation in its critical post-independence phase of development.

To understand the scale of the challenge in forging a new democracy it is important to appreciate that from the earliest days of independence much effort has been focused on areas such as the development of the machinery of government; a professional and efficient bureaucracy, a judicial system, an electoral system, a health care system, an education system, a system for controlling corruption and the list goes on. In addition there is the need to address the legacy of a period of prolonged conflict. Tangible outcomes of this nation-building, essential in a modern democracy, include the institutions of the State Inspector General, the Civil Service Commission, the Provedor for Human Rights and Justice and the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Xanana Gusmao has provided the guidance and astute leadership necessary to establish clear policy direction – a pathway – to enable this impressive progress to occur and to produce enduring and tangible benefits for a fledgling nation.

A very significant achievement of the first Gusmao Government has been the creation of the Strategic Development Plan 2011 to 2030. This ambitious and powerful Plan sets a specific framework to protect the country from regional imbalance and make use of the great potential of Timor-Leste, providing equal opportunities to the people of Timor Leste, all of whom should benefit from the emerging wealth of the country.

The Strategic Development Plan sets benchmarks, implementation and achievement timeframes for Education, Health, Social inclusion, the Environment and Culture and Heritage. It establishes ambitious development objectives for Roads and Bridges, Water and Sanitation, energy supply, Airports, and Telecommunications – the crucial infrastructure of a nation and the cornerstone of economic independence and prosperity.

It sets the course for Timor-Leste's development trajectory over the next 20 years and is the product of wide ranging research, study, reflection and consultation. During the formative stages in the development of the Plan the Prime Minister crisscrossed the country, personally visiting every one of Timor-Leste's 65 subdistricts to discuss the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead for the nation, holding open meetings for inclusive consultation. From the outset it was seen as critical that the Strategic Development Plan should be a Timorese plan for the Timorese people; a plan "country owned" and in its implementation "country led." The significance of the Strategic Development Plan for the nation and the role of the Prime Minister in its formation cannot be understated.

Another great achievement in the evolution of Timor-Leste has been the visionary use of petroleum royalties to build a future fund and support an expansionary economic and social development program. Under the Prime Minister's leadership revenues from oil and gas have increased through investment diversification strategies, and the effective management of the sector by the National Petroleum Authority. It is considered by many that the Fund is being managed to achieve world's best practice.

These strategies have contributed to a reduction in poverty by over 9% and the establishment of critical core infrastructure.

Political leadership and deep commitment are needed to recognise and guide a nation at the best of times - they must be finely honed, intuitive and powerful in the very formative stages – the key characteristics of Xanana Gusmao.

With the clarion call: come let us build stability together, under his progressive political leadership the international community has been welcomed in providing assistance to the people of Timor-Leste in order to build stable partnerships for the future.

CHANCELLOR,

Xanana Gusmao has been recognised and honoured with prizes and awards many times throughout his long political career for his dedication to the cause of nation building and for his

personal sacrifice and commitment to bring peace and independence to the people of Timor-Leste. He has received internationally recognised awards such as the Path to Peace Award from the Path to Peace Foundation; the International Herald Tribune “Leadership with Integrity” Award and the BusinessWeek “Stars of Asia” Award.

He is the recipient of many prestigious national honours such as the Order of Freedom from Portugal; the Order of Merit from New Zealand; the Order of Vanuatu first Class Medal from the Republic of Vanuatu; and the Grand Cross of the Order of Ipiranga from Brazil. He has also been presented with an Honorary Knighthood of the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George.

He has been awarded honorary doctorates from other highly regarded international institutions including - Lusíada University; the University of Oporto; Victoria University; University of Takushoku; University of Coimbra; Suncheon National University and he has received the highly prestigious Order of Merit José Bonifácio, Grau de Gran-Oficial from the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

It has been said that “the basis of national identity is a collective feeling of belonging to a specific nation, with its own symbols, traditions, sacred places, ceremonies, heroes, history and Territory”. Xanana Gusmao has provided outstanding political leadership as President and now as Prime Minister to lead his people, the people of Timor-Leste, to build and strengthen their nation and thereby our region.

Chancellor,

With acclamation, I present to you for the award of Doctor of Letters, Honoris Causa, at this University His Excellency Dr Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao