

UN Secretary-General's remarks at Signing Ceremony of a New Maritime Boundary Agreement between Australia and Timor-Leste

New York, 06 March 2018: Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me, first of all, to say that this is a particularly important day for me. One of my most important motivations in my political career in the past was the self-determination of the people of East Timor. And it was with an enormous joy that I was present the day East Timor became an independent country. To see this ceremony is like the complement of that day, and to be here today is an enormous privilege and fills my heart with joy.

This ceremony demonstrates the strength of international law and the effectiveness of resolving disputes through peaceful means. A central element in the Charter of the United Nations, the peaceful settlement of disputes is also a cornerstone of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which both Australia and Timor-Leste are parties.

This event is historic as it marks the successful conclusion of the first-ever conciliation proceedings under Annex V to the Convention.

I congratulate both parties and the Conciliation Commission for their constructive engagement and relentless efforts to achieve an outcome that is agreeable to both States.

I also congratulate the Governments of the Commonwealth of Australia and Timor-Leste for the ground-breaking recourse to this conciliation mechanism. In doing so, you have furthered the vision of the drafters of the Convention to provide a flexible approach to the resolution of disputes.

I trust that your example will inspire other States to consider conciliation as a viable alternative for dispute settlement under the Convention.

The Agreement being signed today is a further contribution to establishing legal certainty in the world's oceans, an essential condition for stable relations, peace and security, and the achievement of sustainable development.

By delimiting the maritime boundary between Australia and Timor-Leste in the Timor Sea, and by establishing a special regime for the area comprising the Greater Sunrise gas field, this Agreement puts Australia and Timor-Leste in a better position

to exercise their respective rights and obligations under the Convention in an effective manner. It should also ensure that both States fully benefit from the sustainable exploitation of natural resources in the Timor Sea.

I again salute the vision and determination of Australia and Timor-Leste in making this Agreement possible. I hope that its successful implementation will inspire other States to follow in your footsteps.

Sincere congratulations and thank you very much.