



P R I M E
M I N I S T E R

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRIME MINISTER
DR RUI MARIA DE ARAÚJO
CLOSING THE
DEBATE ON THE INDIVIDUAL ARTICLES
OF THE GENERAL STATE BUDGET 2017**

National Parliament, Dili
9 December 2016

Your Excellency the Speaker of Parliament
Your Excellencies the Deputy Speakers
Distinguished Members of Parliament
Fellow Government Members
People of Timor-Leste,

I would like to underline and thank you for the democratic and constructive manner in which we debated the State General Budget 2017 during the appreciation of the overall document, the discussions within the Eventual Commission and this final debate on the individual articles.

I also want to praise the decision by Parliament to set up the Eventual Commission as a way to make proceedings faster without losing transparency and exactness. Indeed, establishing the Eventual Commission enabled us to continue appreciating the present Budget effectively.

I am also appreciative of the nearly 80 proposals submitted by the illustrious Members of Parliament, which received our utmost attention and which were debated over 3 days in a democratic and open manner, so that inasmuch as possible they could be included without compromising the fiscal ceiling and without hindering the commitments made by the Government concerning the implementation of the projects, programmes and activities proposed for 2017.

The joint reflection that took place during the Eventual Commission was a rather flexible exercise that reflected the maturity with which Parliament and the Government work towards the same goal, i.e. making sure that public monies are used in such a way as to enable the improvement of the living situation of our people and the sustainable development of our country.

As such, the Government continues committed to carrying out its programme and to continue working to build on the progress made already, by focusing on the construction of crosscutting and multiyear infrastructures that will enable boosting the non-petroleum economy and increasing the sustainability of our development project. The Government's key goals will continue to include the social sector and the improvement of the services provided to the people.

Consequently, during the Eventual Commission we were pleased to be able to accommodate the budget alteration proposals, many of which through internal adjustments between Government agencies, so as not to prevent the contingency reserve from being used for its intended purposes, namely to meet unforeseeable and undelayable expenses, and not to compromise the continuity and sustainability of the projects already started under the Infrastructure Fund.

We are also very pleased to have come to a consensus on how to strengthen justice agencies, with as much flexibility as possible. This will enable us to recruit international technical assistance – magistrates, auditors and other technical assistants – for the Public Defence Office, the Public Prosecution and the Courts, as well as to ensure the

implementation of the Remuneration Statute for Magistrates, administrative staff and new officers of justice.

Being able to encompass the staff working in Parliament, in the Special Autonomous Region of Oe-cusse Ambeno and in the Special Zones of Social Market Economy within the social security contributory regime was another very positive aspect achieved during the Eventual Commission.

I would also like to highlight Parliament's willingness to integrate the social security budget – proposed separately by the Government, since the general regime for social security was still being reviewed – within the State General Budget 2017 law. Since both budgets are related, the Government considers that the principles of unity and universality are best served by having the State Budget covered by a single law.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, People of Timor-Leste,

I would like to remind you all that this State budget is the last one to be presented by this Government. As in the previous three years, Your Excellencies the Members of Parliament have approved unanimously the overall budget document we submitted to this Great House.

The unanimous approval of this management instrument means that there is general consensus in Timor-Leste regarding the construction and development of our State and our Nation.

It means that despite diverging ideas we have managed to work democratically in order to achieve a new political environment and a new political consensus. This political consensus, in addition to other achievements, makes Timor-Leste an example for developing countries, which are increasingly seeing Timor-Leste as a success story. This consensus has enabled us to guide our country towards success and sustainable development.

This consensus does not seek to divide Timor-Leste according to the interests of one person or group, nor to follow a couple of people or a couple of groups. Inefficiency, waste and corruption are risks to public investment and can happen regardless of political consensus.

The political environment and the political consensus, which can be stronger or weaker since 2013, are in my opinion an actual example of the wise philosophy of our ancestors, which is also the basis for the “fetosá-umane” socio-anthropological relation⁽¹⁾ or the philosophy built around the concept that “raw food belongs to individuals, cooked food belongs to everyone”.

Having political consensus is important for building the State and the Nation and for enabling more efficient sustainable development. Indeed, the new political environment has created a constructive and responsible political dynamic over the past four years. With your permission, I would like to give a standing ovation to the two architects of this

political environment and political consensus: Maun Bo'ot Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão and Comrade Mari Alkatiri!

The debates we have held to discuss our different ideas have enabled us to decide what is best for our people and our country. We trust that future Governments will continue working like this.

This political consensus also gives more responsibility to the Sovereign Bodies, not just those responsible for executing the budget and implementing programmes but also those responsible for verifying this execution and implementation.

As has been said before, the Government considers this unanimity as a vote of confidence that the Sixth Constitutional Government will want to honour until its last day in office by working with the utmost dedication for the People and the nation.

Lastly, and because this is probably my last opportunity to address Your Excellencies in person before the Christmas season, I would like, on behalf of the Sixth Constitutional Government, to wish you all, your families and the Nation a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2017.

Thank you very much.

9 December 2016
Dr Rui Maria de Araújo