



PRIME  
MINISTER

**SPEECH BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY PRIME MINISTER  
KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO**

**AT THE INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE: REVITALISING SMALL  
ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES ECONOMIES FOR  
ACCELERATED AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH**

St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda  
28 May 2024

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government

Distinguished participants

Dear friends,

Like most Small Island Developing States, Timor-Leste needs sustainable development to secure our future.

We need jobs for our workers, opportunities for our economy and hope for our people.

Many SIDS are isolated from the global economy with limited resources to build their nations. We face human resource constraints and inadequate education and healthcare systems.

And the world in which we live, created by the developed countries, is highly unequal with a global order that was designed by them, for them.

And now, we face a new challenge. SIDS are at the forefront of experiencing the devastating impacts of climate change.

While developed countries built their economies at the expense of the developing world, it is SIDS that will suffer the most from the effects of climate change.

The equation is very simple – the rich and developed world has not done enough to address the problems that they have created.

For us as a Small Island Developing State, sometimes it feels like we face so many challenges that we do not know where to start. But we know that if everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority.

We understand that economic growth is essential for our stability and sovereignty.

Timor-Leste greatly appreciates the Secretary-General's speech this morning, where he mentioned that the current global system is failing to deliver for developing countries, in particular SIDS.

Since Timor-Leste's independence in 2002, we have had to use all our efforts to build peace and the institutions of State from the ground up.

We are fortunate in Timor-Leste to be blessed with great natural beauty – from the forests in our mountains, down to the coral reefs that fringe our tropical beaches.

These natural assets offer us a unique opportunity to develop a blue economy centred on marine tourism and sustainable fisheries.

Yet, we also recognise that this growth must be sustainable, balancing development with environmental preservation.

One initiative that Timor-Leste will announce at this SIDS Conference to accelerate sustainable economic development is to establish a Marine Park on Ataúro Island.

This initiative will conserve the island's internationally significant marine environment while building a sustainable blue economy to provide jobs for our people.

We will need to conduct scientific research and biodiversity studies, develop infrastructure to protect our tropical reefs, and develop frameworks for governance of a blue economy. We cannot do this alone.

Like all SIDS, we will need international cooperation and partnerships.

I hope our development of a blue economy for Ataúro Island will become a model for sustainable development in SIDS.

Because we all know that to achieve sustainable development, we must all work together, for our shared benefit, and for our shared planet.

Timor-Leste looks forward to learning more from other SIDS at this Dialogue and at the SIDS conference. Our only option is to work together in solidarity and in friendship.

Thank you.

Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão