

**Closing Remarks by AMBASSADOR BARRY DESKER
DEAN, S. RAJARATNAM SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY**

**RSIS Distinguished World Leaders Lecture by
HIS EXCELLENCY DR JOSÉ RAMOS-HORTA
PRESIDENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF TIMOR-LESTE
“THE OBAMA PROMISE, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN ASIA”**

**17 December 2009
Marina Mandarin Hotel**

His Excellency Dr Jose Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste;

Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mr Zainul Abidin Rasheed;

I would like to begin by thanking Mr Zainul Abidin Rasheed for agreeing so promptly when approached to chair this afternoon’s event. I would also like to thank President Ramos-Horta for his kind reference to our friendship, which dates back to the late 1970s. Like other common friends who are present in the audience today, we are indeed honoured that although President Ramos-Horta now has an exalted status in international society, he has been one person who has been willing to recall old friendships and times well spent, or misspent, in the distant past.

President Ramos-Horta today stressed the promise, the potential and the possibilities of the Obama presidency. He observed that President Obama has injected renewed hope and momentum into the stalled Middle East peace process. He also discussed the lessening of tensions in the world with the advent of the Obama presidency, mentioning President Obama’s University of Cairo speech and its impact on Middle East negotiations, and his influence on the shaping of relations with Russia, Iran and Venezuela. He also draw attention to President Obama’s Prague speech on nuclear disarmament and the concrete action he has taken since then in resuming nuclear arms

reduction talks, leading hopefully to the elimination of all nuclear weapons President Ramos-Horta highlighted President Obama's conciliatory approach, which has won over many millions of people. His talk also paid significant attention to environmental challenges and climate change. I should add that this is no empty rhetoric. During his current visit to Singapore, President Ramos-Horta has visited the Marina Barrage, desalination plants and waste management facilities in Singapore.

We are happy to have him once again in Singapore. He has direct ties with RSIS. His son Loro Horta is a PhD candidate with us and was the top Master of Science student of 2006, both in his class and for producing the best dissertation. We are pleased to have a continuing connection with his country and welcome more students from Timor-Leste.

In conclusion, I would like to thank President Ramos-Horta for his stimulating address today. We look forward to his visits to Singapore and hope that we can enjoy his excellent company again in the not-too-distant future.