

**WELCOME REMARKS BY MR ZAINUL ABIDIN RASHEED**

**SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**RSIS DISTINGUISHED WORLD LEADERS LECTURE**

**17 DECEMBER 2009**

**MARINA MANDARIN HOTEL**

Your Excellency Dr Jose Ramos-Horta,

President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste;

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very warm welcome to all of you. This is indeed a big day for me, to chair a session by a Nobel laureate. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Timor-Leste's President Dr Jose Ramos-Horta. We are delighted that he has accepted the invitation by the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) to address a distinguished audience in Singapore. For his lecture, President Ramos-Horta has chosen a salient topic – "The Obama Promise: Opportunities and Challenges in Asia". As we all know, a month ago, President Barack Obama articulated the US' renewed commitment to Asia during his first visit to the region. He was later in Singapore for APEC, and I could feel his charisma, sincerity and purpose when I shook his hand. We look forward to hearing President Ramos-Horta share with us the hopes and aspirations of Asia's youngest nation towards the Obama Administration's engagement with our region.

2           But first, allow me to say a few words about our distinguished guest speaker. RSIS has already circulated his biography, so I will not repeat all the fascinating details here. As we all know, President Ramos-Horta is admired around the world as a champion for peace. His success in resolving the conflict in his homeland is a model for building peace and democracy in a world too often crippled by violence and waste. President Ramos-Horta's efforts were recognised when he was conferred the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996.

3           Timor-Leste has been blessed with two outstanding political leaders – President Ramos-Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao. Since the restoration of independence in Timor-Leste in 2001, President Ramos-Horta has been deeply and ably involved in the country's development. He has worked tirelessly in his various capacities – as Foreign Minister, Prime Minister and now President – to bring his country onto a path of growth and development by stabilising the domestic security situation and strengthening Timor-Leste's links with the outside world.

4           Today, Timor-Leste has made impressive achievements. It has implemented its National Development Plan (NDP), and put the necessary structures in place to govern its oil and gas resources so that Timor-Leste's wealth will be put to serve the well-being of present and future generations wisely. In addition, Timor-Leste has also made significant progress in enacting legislation to complete the governance architecture set out in its Constitution and creating the environment for private sector development. All of these measures will be important for job creation in Timor-Leste.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5 Singapore is pleased to have played a role in Timor-Leste's reconstruction. This has contributed towards the strong and enduring bonds between our two countries and the warm friendship between our leaders. I am pleased to note that it was in Timor-Leste that Singapore made our largest-ever deployment of peacekeepers for a United Nations operation. In 2002, we contributed a Company strength Task Force comprising 160 army personnel, 72 Air Support crew and four helicopters. The Singapore Police Force has also been deploying officers to serve in UN Missions in Timor-Leste since 2000. Today, Singapore has a 21-member police contingent and two military officers serving in Timor-Leste under the UNMIT. In addition, Singapore has extended technical assistance to Timor-Leste as well as scholarships for Timorese students to study at our tertiary institutions.

6 As our government-to-government links continue to grow, I am also pleased to note that more Singaporean entrepreneurs are investing in Timor-Leste. The burgeoning Singapore community in Timor-Leste also includes volunteer groups, which are an important building block for enhancing people-to-people links. This ever-increasing connectivity between our two nations has been further boosted by the commencement of SilkAir's direct flights between Singapore and Dili in August 2008.

7 In short, Singapore is happy to have participated in Timor-Leste's post-independence development. We are happy to see Timor-Leste emerge to become the nation that it is today – determined to promote growth and improve the lives of all Timorese people. We are confident that under President Ramos-

Horta's wise leadership, as well as that of the government led by Prime Minister Xanana Gusmao, the nation will continue to prosper.

8 Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to hand the floor over to President Ramos-Horta to deliver his lecture.

9 Thank you.

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