



**Address by the Deputy Agent, Elizabeth Exposto, Chief  
Executive Officer of the Maritime Boundary Office,  
at the Compulsory Conciliation  
Proceedings at the Peace Palace at The Hague**

**The Hague, Netherlands  
29 August 2016**

Mr. Chairman,

Members of the Commission,

It is a great honour to appear before you as Deputy Agent, on behalf of my country, the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste.

Timor-Leste is honoured to take part in this very first compulsory conciliation under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea. We are also very appreciative of the Commission and its faith in the conciliation process led by it.

Timor-Leste's statehood is a story of national perseverance, resolve and hope. The people of Timor-Leste have paid an extremely high price for our independence, finally achieved 14 years ago. Despite the brutal occupation and fighting we endured, we did not emerge vengeful or vindictive. Throughout our struggle, our leaders preached tolerance and respect towards others.

Though we do not forget our painful and difficult past, we are a resilient people that look forward, first and foremost. After our independence, the Timorese people opted for reconciliation and building a new and peaceful relationship with our former occupiers.

Now, times have changed and the form of Timor-Leste's struggle has changed. With the majority of our population under the age of 25, our hope

for nation building lies in the future. And it is up to the representatives of Timor-Leste to do their utmost to secure a better future for our young generation and their children. It is a national priority to secure our sovereign rights over our surrounding seas and the resources that lie therein, which hold the promise of a transformational development for our country. The future for the next generations would look very different without access to our seas.

This is what brings us here today. Timor-Leste has initiated these proceedings to resolve our longstanding maritime dispute with our neighbour Australia in an amicable and collaborative way. We are here to pursue our rights for the sake of our people and take on the responsibilities of Statehood, like any other nation would. Timor-Leste may be young but we are not naïve. We will not shy away from claiming what is rightfully ours and we will persist until this is finally achieved.

We have faith that this Commission can assist us to settle our differences with Australia in a just and fair manner and we look forward to working with the Commission and Australia to bring our maritime dispute to its conclusion, for our future generations.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission, in today's opening session, Timor-Leste will present to the Commission its overall position on the maritime dispute with Australia. We will provide you with the background and facts relevant to the dispute and outline Timor-Leste's position on its permanent maritime boundaries in the Timor Sea under international law.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission, let me briefly introduce the members of the Timorese delegation to these proceedings.

Our presentation will be opened by a founding father of our nation, the leader of the Timorese resistance, the first President of the Republic, the former Prime Minister, and now Timor-Leste's Chief Negotiator – His Excellency Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão. His Excellency will be followed by Professor Vaughan Lowe QC, who will provide the relevant background for these proceedings, and in particular the factual context that has given rise to the dispute between the Parties. Then, Sir Michael Wood will present on Timor-Leste's maritime boundary under international law in the Timor Sea. Finally, Timor-Leste's Agent, the Minister of State and of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Agio Pereira, will make our closing remarks for this session.

Mr. Chairman, I ask you to invite Minister Gusmão to address the Commission.