



**SOPHIA UNIVERSITY  
HONOURARY AWARD CEREMONY**

**COMMEMORATIVE SPEECH**

by

**KAY RALA XANANA GUSMÃO**

***“Shaping a New Era of Peace and Development  
in a Post- Covid World”***

**Sophia University  
Tokyo, Japan**

**26 November 2021**

H.E. Prof. Dr. Yoshiaki Terumichi, President of Sophia University

H.E. Prof. Dr. Tsutomu Sakuma S.J., Chancellor of Sophia School Corporation

H.E. Prof. Dr. Shintaro Fukutake, Professor of Faculty of Global Studies

Excellencies, Members of the Academic Council, Faculties and Departments from Sophia University,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Students,

I would like to start by thanking the Sophia University for hosting this ceremony.

It is a great honour and an enormous privilege for me to receive the academic Award. I am humbled to accept the Honorary Doctorate from this Catholic Institution of higher education, in the amazing city of Tokyo.

In addition to internationally acknowledged academic excellence, your century-old Institution has a long history of promoting humanist values and principles that are vital for the young people of today. Living up to the legacy of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, who worked with dedication to make the world a better place, Sophia University is making its contribution to a more peaceful world.

This University cannot be separated from the resiliency of the Jesuits, nor from Japan and the Japanese people. Japan and its impressive post-war reconstruction is an inspiration to the world in general and to Timor-Leste in particular.

Ever since it was established, this most beautiful sanctuary of global education has been promoting globalisation and the internationalisation of human development, cooperation and peace, so that no one is left behind in this unequal and ever-changing world.

Those, who know a little about me, know that I was never able to attend higher education. Instead, I had to enrol in the “school of life”.

## **I. The period of Post-WWII**

My childhood was a happy one, even though I was poor. I ran freely on soft green grass in one of the many beautiful places of my country. As you may know, I was born right after the WWII.

My father was a primary school teacher. He would read me Catholic magazines and teach me many things, including stories from the War. He was one of those people who, in exchange for a pittance, helped the colonial power – the Portuguese – rekindle the notion of “*cross and sword*”, while never reneging on his own origins and traditions.

I think that is why I am starting my speech this way. My father was a man of principles.

He wanted to break away from the vision of a small world,

where children grow without ambition. My father wanted his children to be able to dream of something more than a life of poverty.

That is how I came to study at the Dare Seminary, which was headed by Jesuit priests. Although a rebellious youngster, much of what I am today I developed during that time. I learned values and principles. I also learned about the importance of trust and the will to serve – particularly those most vulnerable and most in need of solidarity.

Here, I want to praise the commitment of the Jesuits by starting a High School Level in Timor, through the Dare Seminary, right after the WWII, from where many Timorese became leaders of the Resistance. I pray the 2 portuguese Jesuit priests, the still alive 100 years old Father João Felgueiras and his colleague Father José Martins, both choosing to stay in Timor, all over the 24 years of the struggle, to help the Timorese Youth in their clandestine activities against the occupiers.

While the world was dividing into two blocks that would fight for global dominance, we Timorese were uniting, in spirit, around a collective sense of identity.

A unique identity that, despite being indigenous, allowed itself to adopt moral and Christian tenets; an ancestral, historical and cultural identity that allowed itself to merge with new cultures, habits and traditions; and an identity that, even while suppressed by the colonial power, became increasingly pro-independence, with many through-generations anti-colonial rebellions, with the last big one happened in 1912.

The story of the brutal occupation of Timor-Leste, which lasted for almost a quarter of a century, is well known. I believe

that so is our resilience and the sacrifices we made for independence! And yet, we knew that we too were victims of the Cold War.

During the struggle we heard about the **New World Order** and it was, actually, what sustained us to continue to fight. And I believe that people everywhere were hoping for that New World Order that would bring stability, economic and social welfare and development.

As such, we, Timorese, learned to look at the world with critical thinking, understanding that the disintegration of the ideals of European superiority and the fragmentation of the bipolar world might enable us to continue to fight for self-determination.

This concept was not invented by the Timorese. Indeed, while nationalist ambitions have led to many bloody wars in the past, this could still not subjugate the will of the people to be free.

Even though the United Nations (UN) supported the decolonisation movements back in the 60s, it was only in the 70s, with the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship, that we knew for sure that the right to freedom and independence was not just a pipe dream.

But, during all those years, without any help from outside, it seemed that the right to independence was not a universal principle, because our people were dying and the international community was inactive to put an end to the war.

We resisted because the alternative was: extermination or total domination, by a foreign power. As such, knowing that we will not defeat the enemy by military means, our motto became

## **“to Resist is to Win”!**

And the Timorese People owe to the Solidarity Movements, including the Japanese Parliamentarian Support, which started to organize the Plea for our Right to Independence, under the Universal Principles of Self-Determination.

## **II. The New World Order**

For a certain period in history, there was honest and serious dialogue between States and Nations, in the search for peace. However, in Timor-Leste we had to wait for too long.

In **March of 1983**, in an mutually agreed ‘cease-fire’ process, I met, in the jungle, the Indonesian military Commander, Colonel Purwantu, and I handed, to him, our Peaceful Solution Plan, asking him to send to President Soeharto, in Jakarta, to consider.

In that **“Peace Plan”**, we asked for a more direct involvement from the United Nations and to give way to Portugal and Indonesia to start negotiating honestly about a Referendum, in which the Timorese people would decide on their own destiny.

In **1992**, I was captured and sent to Cipinang prison, in Jakarta.

This was precisely one year after the infamous Santa Cruz massacre, where Indonesian soldiers killed almost three

hundred young people who were claiming to the world, through a peaceful demonstration, that the only way to solve our problem should be the result of a negotiable and peaceful solution. That massacre was 30 years ago this month, on the 12 of November.

In my defence in the Indonesian court, I said to the International Community that it was *“time to prove we are facing the new world order. We need actions that indicate a break with the situations inherited from the past”*<sup>1</sup>.

Sadly, nearly three decades later I continue, today, to make the same plea – *‘We need actions that indicate a break with the situations inherited from the past.’*

Still, during that new dawn, States that had never shared the Western traditions of the Rule of Law, democracy, human rights, economic rights, social rights and a market economy started to become infused with new concepts.

It was during this period that the European Union was formally established, that the number of democracies grew and that societies and nations were pacified through negotiation and processes of technical assistance.

From Latin America to Africa and Asia, we can find positive examples on virtually every continent. This includes the normalisation of the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, the autonomy plan for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the independence of Namibia, the end of Apartheid in South Africa

---

<sup>1</sup> Xanana Gusmão (1994), *“Timor-Leste - One People, One Homeland”*, Edições Colibri

and, as we saw, the start of the democratic transition in Indonesia, which walked hand in hand with the right of the Timorese to vote for their independence.

Still, what we need to highlight about that period are the movements in favour of peace and a collective effort towards greater diplomacy when resolving crises and conflicts, as opposed to a paradigm of mistrust, imposition and menace.

It is not a coincidence that Timor-Leste earned its right to independence through a **Referendum held in 1999**.

But, sadly, we had to wait for 16 years, from March 1983 to April 1999, to see our **Peace Plan**, which I presented to the Indonesian government, through Colonel Purwantu, **become a reality**.

I can say that my country is a result of the determination of its People to accept all the sacrifices and, of course, a success of multilateralism.

*“The independence of Timor-Leste owes much to the UN. Still, Timor-Leste also gave much to the UN and to the world, at a time when the UN needed this help. Timor-Leste proved that International Law can be put into practice. It proved that the UN and multilateralism work; that they are relevant; and that they have a positive impact in the lives of thousands of people. It also proved that conflicts can be resolved at the negotiation table”* - it was the UN Secretary-General António Guterres<sup>2</sup>, who said it.

After the destruction left by our occupiers, who were

---

<sup>2</sup> Bárbara Reis e Fernando Neves (2019), “*The Negociator – Diplomatic Revelations about Timor Leste (1997-1999)*”, D. Quixote, Lisboa

enraged at the victory we achieved through democracy, Timor-Leste rose from the ashes. I must honestly say that the first few years of independence were not easier than the years of occupation. We had to learn how to be a State and how to be a Nation. This was no small feat, since our People were hurt and scarred from the years of occupation. This resulted in a period, between **2003 and 2007**, where we had cyclical crises of violence.

With the assistance from the International Community and with great effort from our people, in **2009**, we succeeded to put an end to our internal problems, keeping the promise we made to the World during the years of occupation - we never wanted to jeopardise stability in the region.

We were also able to acknowledge that we do not just share an island with Indonesia – we also share a future. Today we walk side by side, in friendship and cooperation.

Our Reconciliation is a model of good will, focusing on the future and on development, rather than being a tale of bitterness and conflict.

We also had to look inwards. We recognised that it is sometimes harder to reconcile amongst ourselves than with our “enemies”. This led us to realise that we had to come together and work on our internal differences.

As a Nation, we acknowledged that we could not build a State without building peace within ourselves.

And so, we started a process of dialogue, seeking to engage all our people. We adopted a new political stance when dealing with our people and our institutions, searching for

solutions. We dealt honestly with the root causes of our problems, through a bottom-up approach, putting the interests of the whole above any individual interests.

We advocated dialogue and peaceful political actions in the region and in the world, namely through the **‘g7+’**, a group, established in 2010, by 20 fragile and conflict-affected States that wanted to share their experiences and to promote Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, Reconciliation and Sustainable Prosperity in this unequal world.

And, when we solved our internal crisis, we launched the motto **‘Goodbye Conflict, Welcome Development’**, now adopted as a political commitment by the **‘g7+’** Organization.

### **III. From 9/11 to the Covid-19 pandemic**

The New World Order turned into a New World Disorder.

The world became governed by political and economic supremacy. Despite the military power of the United States of America, which reacted ferociously to the 2001 attacks, we were left with a multipolar world, where a new orchestra sets the world’s trends – or divisions.

The truth is that the New World Order resulted in an appalling contrast between the rich North and the poor South, but for a few exceptions. And worse than this disparity is the “colonialist” condescension of the rich, telling others what they should do in their own countries.

Every action by government agents, the private sector, development partners and each private citizen should seek to advance Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. Dialogue and preventive diplomacy are much more likely to succeed than any type of military action, and will prevent the sacrifice of countless lives.

In **2011**, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon defined preventive diplomacy as “*diplomatic action taken, at the earliest possible stage, to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur*”<sup>3</sup>.

And yet, there are World Leaders who discuss peace agreements at lunch and sign arms deals at dinner! Most conflicts in fragile countries are the result of hegemonic policies by powerful nations and/or their multinationals. Fragile countries are often used as battlefields, in which other parties wage their wars.

On the other hand, Peace often depends on a deeply personal commitment. And it is in Universities such as this one, with so many talented young people, that we may start to make a difference. Education for Peace must begin in our schools and our Universities.

It will have an enormous impact on every aspect of public and private life. That is the hope that young people give us – that your skills and knowledge may contribute to a more just and tolerant world.

---

<sup>3</sup> Secretary-General's Report (2011), “*Preventive Diplomacy: Delivering Results*”

You can learn from past and current mistakes to build a better future.

I know it must be tiring for you, the “**men and women of tomorrow**”, to listen to the same things over and over again. That you will be the ones to put into practice what the “**men and women of today**” only say in words. Still, that is what hope is all about!

We also have **Climate Change**, an issue that led to over 100 world leaders holding a two-week meeting in Glasgow. Based on scientific evidence, Climate Change is being felt in various countries and threatens the survival of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and ultimately all humankind.

And you, young students, know this. Japan is one of the countries most affected by climate change: storms, heat waves and typhoons, causing death, destruction and huge financial losses. Meanwhile, there are people in Madagascar reduced to eating grasshoppers and even mud.

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear Students,

We see World Leaders and Organisations trying to respond to humanitarian crises, increasing hunger and misery, and the impacts of Climate change, and still we continue not to address the root causes of problems. We continue not to apply the concept of “**diplomatic action taken, at the earliest possible stage**”, which is to say that we continue not to act pre-emptively.

Even those, who did not have the opportunity of attending

school, know that there can be no lasting peace and no development solutions without first casting seeds and tending the roots, so that the plants may grow. Furthermore, each seed requires different care, and each fruit may turn out to be promising or disastrous.

It pains me to see that some human beings have difficulty accepting that an international system of open dialogue and genuine negotiation may be more advantageous than a system of confrontation and of “*me first*” policy, by thinking that the multilateralism is a limitation to sovereignty.

#### **IV. A new era of peace and development in a post-Covid world**

History gives us no great reasons to be optimistic. There is not a favourable planetary climate, in every sense of the word ‘climate’.

Yet, today I still want to be optimist.

I want to believe in the extraordinary intelligence of human beings and in their ability to do good things. At a time when we hear about a new industrial revolution based on artificial intelligence, how could we not be optimistic that we will be able to find solutions for the common good, instead of increasing disparities?

As some countries move on from the disaster, brought by the Covid-19 pandemic and the geopolitical map is redrawn, it is imperative that we move towards global peace and

development.

The pandemic interrupted the normal flow of history and exposed many of the weaknesses of the international order.

And yet, despite the closing of borders and the economic, social and institutional crises all over the world, despite the fact that the poorest countries became even poorer and despite the overall weakening of democracy, there was a special moment in this tragedy that must be seized upon.

So many people rightly believed that the pandemic was a unique opportunity to build a better world. So many people responded collectively to the need for isolation and social distancing, and understood the value of collective action. Many people suddenly found their children deprived of access to education and/or the necessary technologies to pursue that education, and therefore feared for their future. Many people suffered with the interruption of access to raw materials, goods, services, markets and consumers. For many people, it was the first time they were unable to cross borders at will.

Did we learn anything from this? Do we now feel more empathy towards others for whom these difficulties are part of their daily lives? I doubt it....

Perhaps we will understand better if we know that some countries in Africa have vaccination rates below 1%. Not only is this tragic for these countries, it also creates a risk of new variants emerging, which may lead to a new public health crisis and render useless the higher vaccination rates achieved in the richest countries.

Two days ago, the news about Covid-19 were terrifying and Experts said that, *'till March 2022, will be more than 2,2 millions new deaths'*! And, right this morning, I learned that WHO will have a Special Meeting, just today, to discuss the emerging, in South Africa, of a new Covid-19 variant, with 'large number of mutations'.

We all can see that it is time to really understand that 'no one is safe until everyone is safe'.

People speak about a changing world, but they do not say much about what has to be changed individually or as a society. There are no right or wrong perspectives – instead, there are tensions that do not result in the reconciliation of perspectives, actions and intents.

We need individual change in human beings. One Greta Thunberg is not enough, we need several Gretas and for every issue that troubles us. If we do not want extremist acts on our borders, then we cannot allow extremist positions within our own borders. We must work to ensure a new international order that serves everyone's interests.

We need new heroes such as Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Kim Dae-jung, Martin Luther King, Kofi Annan, Malala Yousafzai, and a recently deceased, the former President of Portugal, Jorge Sampaio, who among other things created the Global Platform for Higher Education, which was initially meant to assist Syrian students and was recently expanded to include, as well as Afghan students, all students who have refugee status or who have been affected by humanitarian emergencies or crises.

Your Excellencies  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear Students,

I know that I have already taken much of your time, but before I conclude I would like to raise two more aspects that I believe to be essential.

**First**, the importance of education to a World of Peace and Development. In my view, educating children and young people is part of preventive diplomacy. Enabling access to the tools, that allow young people to fulfil their destiny of participating in a more developed and peaceful future, is the best investment any country can make, particularly in the case of young people coming from situations of fragility.

In Timor-Leste, the St. Ignatius of Loyola College has been making a difference. Established in 2014, it has already produced its first graduates. More than just a school, the St. Ignatius of Loyola College may be a significant part of the future of a country, where a third of our population is illiterate and over 50% of our population are under 20 years old.

We appreciate the support of the “Jesuit Education Project”, particularly the support from Japan, which allows our young people to continue their higher education in order to make a difference. This means more young people who can now play their part in achieving the impossible!

**Secondly**, the Climate Summit, which concluded around two weeks ago.

We cannot consider that this summit was a success in terms of commitments for mitigating the major threats looming over our future. This should come as no surprise. Indeed, if we cannot solve the pressing issues of today, we could hardly be expected to solve those of the near future.

Civil society was well represented, like the thousands of individuals who took to the streets to put pressure on political decision makers all over the world.

As much as this Summit failed, it is still a success. To bring together almost 200 countries to discuss agreements to address a crisis that many have not yet felt is no easy task, particularly since national interests will always prevail. I say this because I have some experience of negotiations, albeit just between two countries!

When catastrophes arrive at our borders, it is likely that the leaders who sat in Glasgow will no longer be among us. However, you will be. You and your children, and your children's children. Collective action must start today.

Unfair as it may be, this is once again in your hands.

We all know that an alliance on climate requires a good relationship between the States entering that alliance. In view of the "important absentees", it seemed to me that there were more smiles than pacts and commitments. It is the reflection of how things are today.

Those World Leaders smiling in Glasgow tend to be the ones who have contributed the most to climate degradation, rather than those who are suffering as a result of those actions,

since the latter could not even convey their voices properly, let alone their smiles. Thus, developing countries can very well see this Summit as a failure.

Nevertheless, and because I want to be an optimist, we cannot lose heart as long as we do not go another six years until the next agreement, like we did between the Paris Agreement and COP26, and provided that negotiations in good-faith continue, correcting mistakes and amending commitments to make them more ambitious, but still feasible.

And speaking of commitments, as the Special Representative of Timor-Leste for the Blue Economy, I must ask what commitments have been made concerning the health of the ocean – just one ocean, because it connects us all.

This asset of humankind represents over 70% of the planet's surface and absorbs one third of the world's carbon dioxide. Its grass, seaweed and mangrove forests have the potential to contribute with over 20% of the necessary carbon emission reductions. However, I do not think the ocean is being taken into account when discussing ways to protect the planet from global warming. We are also failing to address the issue of increasing ocean pollution, particularly from plastics.

Protecting the Ocean is protecting the Planet, and protecting humankind is not leaving anyone behind. This is achieved through responsible economic development.

When will we have the opportunity to offer individual effort towards a collective benefit? Humankind needs cooperation towards the common good, the sooner the better.

If I may quote something I wrote back when I was a political prisoner: “(...) *Today, in the shackles of anger, I recall the guerrilla fighters who died in battle. And I want to die in a life free from prison. So that I may give life to those who knew how to die!*”<sup>4</sup>

There is a lot going on in the world that merits our anger – issues much more serious than refusing to be administered a vaccine, that is the outcome of cooperation by the world of science towards the common good. In the post-Covid World, my only wish is that our efforts may honour all the victims of poverty, violence, war and climate change, as well as the more than 5 million people who died, as a direct result of the pandemic.

We need people like you, dear Students, with courage to defend causes that are not yours, but everyone’s.

This is the way we can move towards a World of Peace and Solidarity. This World needs more courage and you, dear Students, can prove it’s possible. We need to dream of the impossible, until the possible becomes real.

Everyone has this power – or maybe even this mission – particularly the young people in attendance today. You must never forget that even in the most complex game of chess a simple pawn can change the course of the game and secure a win.

Do it, my dear Students... have the courage... show your commitment... and hand in hand with other young people around

---

<sup>4</sup> Xanana Gusmão (1994), “*Timor-Leste - One People, One Homeland*”, Edições Colibri

the world... just DO IT, for a better future and a better WORLD!

Thank you very much.

**Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão**