



Remarks by the Acting Rector of the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e (UNTL)

Opening Ceremony of the 34th edition of the Diplomatic Training Program

UNTL – 24 August 2026

Your Excellency, Ms. Milena Rangel, Vice Minister for ASEAN Affairs of Timor-Leste;

Mr. Patrick Earle, Executive Director of the Diplomacy Training Program, University of New South Wales;

Professor Armindo Maia, Director of the Human Rights Centre of UNTL;

Distinguished representatives of the Global Campus of Human Rights, the Judicial System Monitoring Programme, and partner institutions;

Dear participants, colleagues and students;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is a great pleasure, on behalf of the Rector of the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e, Professor Dr. Joviano António da Costa, and on behalf of our university community, to welcome you to UNTL for the opening of the 34th edition of the Diplomatic Training Program.

This programme has a very special connection with Timor-Leste.

The Diplomatic Training Program was established in Australia in 1989 through the initiative of His Excellency the President of the Republic, Dr. José Ramos-Horta, Nobel Peace Laureate, who remains its Founder and Patron.

Since then, the programme has contributed to strengthening the knowledge, skills and networks of human rights defenders throughout Asia and the Pacific. It has benefited approximately 4,000 participants from around 50 countries, including many Timorese.

For Timor-Leste, this history has particular significance. Timorese participated in the programme even before the restoration of our independence, including members of our diaspora, and many later went on to serve as diplomats and political leaders or to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Since 2023, Timor-Leste has also become home to the programme. For the fourth consecutive year, the Human Rights Centre of UNTL is proud to host the Diplomatic Training Program in Timor-Leste.

UNTL is also proud to be a member of the Global Campus of Human Rights. The establishment and development of our Human Rights Centre reflect the importance of international cooperation in strengthening human rights education, research, training and community engagement at our University.

We are grateful for the continued cooperation of the Diplomacy Training Program at the University of New South Wales and the Global Campus of Human Rights, and we also acknowledge the Judicial System Monitoring Programme – JSMP and the other partner institutions associated with this programme.

We particularly acknowledge the financial support provided to the programme from 2024 to 2026 by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, through the Global Campus of Human Rights.

This year, we are very pleased to welcome 30 participants from 14 countries across Asia and the Pacific. During the next two weeks, you will have the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences and to strengthen your capacity in human rights advocacy, protection and diplomacy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For Timor-Leste, human rights and diplomacy are not abstract concepts. They are deeply connected to our national history and to the values on which our independence was built.

Our country knows the importance of dialogue, international solidarity, peaceful diplomacy and respect for human dignity.

Today, as Timor-Leste continues to strengthen its regional and international engagement, these principles remain as important as ever.

Universities also have an important responsibility. We must not only transmit knowledge. We must create spaces where people can meet, exchange experiences, learn from one another and develop the knowledge and skills needed to serve their countries and societies.

This is precisely why programmes such as the Diplomatic Training Program are so valuable.

To all participants, I encourage you to make the most of these two weeks. Learn from your trainers, but also learn from one another. Share the experiences of your countries, build lasting professional relationships, and take with you something of Timor-Leste and our own experience of peace, dialogue and nation-building.

I would like to express our sincere appreciation to all the institutions and individuals who have contributed to making this 34th edition possible.

Once again, welcome to the Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e, and welcome to Timor-Leste.

I wish you a productive, enriching and successful programme.

Thank you very much.