

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. Yoshitaka Hanada,
Ambassador of Japan to Timor-Leste
on the occasion of the "Seminar on Road Sector
Development in Timor-Leste"
on 26 November, 2012**

H.E. Mr. Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao, Prime Minister,
H.E. Mr. Gastao Francisco de Sousa, Minister of Public
Works,

H.E. Mr. Agoes Widjanarko, Secretary General, Ministry
of Public Works of Indonesia,

H.E. Mr. Jose Gaspar Piedade, Director General of
Public Works, Ministry of Public Works

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

It is my great pleasure to be here today at the "*Seminar on Road Sector Development in Timor-Leste*" which commemorates the end of the 2 years project of South-South and Triangular Cooperation on road sector development between Timor-Leste, Indonesia and Japan.

The road sector is an essential infrastructure for

socio-economic development in Timor-Leste. Reliable and durable infrastructure is a pre-condition for socio-economic development that could provide equal opportunities for important services, such as healthcare, education and economy for the people. Thus, taking into account the crucial importance of rehabilitation and maintenance of roads in Timor-Leste, this project's overall achievements are indeed significant.

I would like to emphasize that this project's essential feature is in Triangular Cooperation between Timor-Leste, Indonesia and Japan. Indonesia has been very active in promoting South-South Cooperation and has extensive comparative advantages in extending assistance to Timor-Leste, especially in the field of road infrastructure since they have common background in this field. Indonesia is rich in experience in the road sector through years of cooperation with the Government of Japan in carrying out Japan's Yen Loan projects and technical cooperation projects.

Japan and Indonesia are strongly committed to accelerate national development in Timor-Leste, and

our cooperation is not only restricted to this road rehabilitation and maintenance project, but also extend to technical assistance for Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN as well as capacity building of PNTL in Community Policing. The government of Japan sincerely hopes that Triangular Cooperation between Timor-Leste, Indonesia and Japan will be expanded to various fields in the coming years.

When we talk about the development of Timor-Leste, we need to first prioritize in improving nation's livelihood which is to ensure access to basic human needs such as electricity, water, education and health care. With around 70% of the population in Timor-Leste living in rural areas, it is vital that the rural road network is improved to link people and communities in order to encourage agricultural development, increase rural incomes and allow for the effective delivery of government services including health care, education and security.

However, years of insufficient road network and maintenance activities, especially in rural areas, have caused major roads to become very vulnerable to

heavy rain during the rainy seasons, creating recurring problems such as landslides, drainage problems and road re-alignment. Especially during the rainy season, many villages become isolated by roads and bridges that become impassable when washed away or blocked by landslides and floods. I have been to several villages in different districts, and most of the time I did not see any vehicle. When I asked the villagers how they sell their farming crops to local markets, they told me that they had no option but to walk about 4 to 5 hours to the market and same hours coming back.

As you can imagine, this is an immense labour for the villagers and it restricts the ability of people to move and for goods to be transported. Therefore, their economic activities in local markets become less frequent, their daily life will be more isolated from the market economy and consequently they will be mainly engaged in small-scale subsistence farming which is difficult to generate income and create jobs.

Such isolation from local markets impedes not only the improvement of peoples' livelihood but also their

access to healthcare and education. Roads are the primary mode of transport and facilitate development, the delivery of resources and also support the delivery of essential services to its community.

Based on these views, South-South and Triangular Cooperation between Timor-Leste, Indonesia and Japan was agreed and promoted as a prioritized option in compliment to other development engagements to tackle the road situation in Timor-Leste. Indonesian experience in road infrastructure development have a lot of potential to strengthen the capacity of Timor-Leste. Through the engagement process in 2 years, the partnership between Timor-Leste and Indonesia has been more solid, and I strongly hope that such strong cooperation in capacity development will be expanded to other fields as well.

I would like to close my remarks by wishing all the participants who have gained their knowledge and skills through this project for their active contribution in the rehabilitation and maintenance of roads in Timor-Leste, so that the country will continue on an upward trajectory.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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