

Speech by His Excellency the President of the National Parliament
June 26th, 2008

Your Excellency

Honorable President of the House of Councilors of the Japanese
Diet

Honorable Members of the Japanese Parliamentary Delegation
Members of Parliament
Ladies and Gentlemen

Mr. President,

I wish to convey to you and the members of your delegation our warmest and heartfelt welcome to this House. It is both an honor and a privilege to receive your first official visit as the President of the House of Councilors of the Diet of Japan, having accepted my invitation.

Let me begin by expressing our deepest appreciation for all the unrelenting support that, over the years, long since before the restoration of our independence, Japan has always given towards Timor-Leste.

In this occasion, I would like to thank you and express gratitude for all the personal efforts and hard work you undertake on behalf of the cause of Timor-Leste and for the assistance that, through you, the Japanese Government gave to our national independence.

I have been a friend of Mr. Eda since 1989, from the time when we were fighting for our national freedom. At that time, I was the leader of RENETIL, the network of Timorese students in the Resistance, and I cannot forget his personal commitment towards our nation's cause.

In those times of hardship and struggle, your unyielding friendship and help was a message of hope we shall never fail to remember and vital for

the political process that led to the restoration of Timorese independence.

Since 1999, the Government of Japan has been one of the largest donors to Timor-Leste, providing support to a value of USD 252.3 million, in projects ranging from the area of human resources and institutional development to that of infrastructure development and maintenance and to agriculture and rural progress.

The humanitarian and development assistance the Government of Japan has been providing through indirect budget support to the government, funding projects managed by donors, bilateral programs and other financial aid.

We value the continued substantial support for self-sustainable nation-building, embodied in instruments like the Technical Cooperation Agreement, signed in the year 2005.

It is cause for congratulation that mutual relations between Timor-Leste and Japan are excellent. We wish to pay a high praise to this encouraging relationship and hope to foster this process during the future years, as it is critically important for the successful development of our country.

As a young State, Timor-Leste still faces decisive key challenges, over the years to come, as poverty reduction, education, health care, infrastructure and economic development and institutional capacity-building at all levels of State and Government.

In that light, Japan's support remains crucial for the growth of democratic culture, political participation and progress in achieving social and economic development. We see the relations with Japan, at all levels, through diplomatic and parliamentary contacts, as a priority.

Your presence here today constitute a significant contribute to increase our already close bilateral relationship and an opportunity to strengthen our cooperation and, moreover, the ties of friendship for the

mutual benefit of our two countries and between our people.

We look forward to extend our experience sharing and collaboration, especially in Parliament matters, through the parliamentary friendship group with Japan, which is the first to be created in this House, but also to continue working together on issues of mutual concern.

Thank you.