



Keynote Speech

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The impact of Crises in the Middle East on conflict affected countries

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Excellencies,

Director of the Institute for the Promotion of Latin America and the Caribbean,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to this important and timely gathering. I commend the Institute and the g7+ for organising this such important event.

We meet at a particularly delicate moment in international life, of both hope and uncertainty.

Recent efforts to secure peace between the United States and Iran have offered a welcome opportunity to halt a dangerous escalation that threatened not only the region but the wider world peace. We sincerely hope this agreement holds and opens space for dialogue, restraint, and a more durable peace.

Yet even as we welcome this development, we must recognise that the consequences of the crisis extend far beyond the Middle East.

The economic shocks, humanitarian impacts, and geopolitical tensions unleashed by the conflict are already being felt in the rest of the world.

In some of the world's most vulnerable countries, the consequences of these conflicts will persist long after the fighting has ceased.

It is in this context that we gather today.

According to the 2026 Global Peace Index, the world has become less peaceful for twelve consecutive years. There are now sixty-one active conflicts globally—the highest number since the end of the Second World War.

The report further notes that this increase is overwhelmingly driven by “internationalised intrastate conflicts” — civil wars heavily influenced by external intervention — which have surged by more than 175 percent since 2010.

These are not just statistics.

This devastation is felt by people!

I wish to speak about those people.

The people who always pay the highest price when powerful nations go to war.

The people whose voices for peace are too often unheard.

The people whose countries become battlegrounds for proxy conflicts they neither initiated nor desired.

Today, as we reflect on the crisis in the Middle East, I want to bring their perspective into this room.

Before discussing consequences, we must first acknowledge the immense human suffering this crisis has caused.

I extend my deepest solidarity to all innocent civilians who have lost their loved ones. I also express solidarity with the countries of the Gulf region, which have found themselves unwillingly at the centre of escalating tensions.

For decades, the Gulf has been a pillar of global trade, energy security, and economic opportunity. Millions of workers from developing countries depend on it for their livelihoods.

When instability strikes the Middle East, it does not remain confined there.

It travels across oceans and continents.

And it reaches the homes of the world's most vulnerable families.

Excellencies,

The first reality we must recognise is this:

Antagonism between powerful nations rarely remains confined to those nations alone.

Its consequences are disproportionately borne by vulnerable and conflict-affected countries.

Too often, strategic rivalries are played out in the territories of weaker states, while their people carry the human, social, and economic costs of conflicts they did not choose.

Many so-called “internationalized intrastate conflicts”—which have claimed millions of lives over recent decades—have been fuelled by external interests, geopolitical competition, and struggles for influence.

The tragedies of Yemen - a member of G7+ -, Afghanistan – another member G7+ -, Sudan, Haiti – also members of G7+ - Lebanon, and Syria remind us that ordinary citizens frequently become the victims of broader contests for power.

And the people of Palestine continue to endure immense suffering rooted in a long and unresolved history.

Powerful nations often view these conflicts through the lens of geopolitics and strategic advantage.

But in our countries, we see something quite different.

We see human suffering.

We see rising food prices.

We see shrinking incomes.

We see families struggling to survive.

For low-income countries, every increase in fuel prices, every disruption of shipping routes, and every surge in inflation can reverse years of progress.

In Timor-Leste, our economy continues to grow steadily, yet we remain heavily dependent on imports for essential goods.

When shipping routes through the Red Sea or the Gulf are disrupted, costs rise immediately.

The mother buying food in Dili pays more.

The farmer purchasing equipment pays more.

The government building schools, hospitals, and roads pays more.

Our people are forced to absorb the costs of conflicts they neither created nor influenced.

This is a shared reality across the G7+.

For conflict-affected states, a rise in oil prices is not an inconvenience—it is a development crisis. It means higher transport costs, higher food prices, greater debt burdens, and deeper poverty.

The second consequence is equally troubling:

The diversion of global attention and resources.

For years, the international community committed itself to the Sustainable Development Goals and pledged that no country would be left behind.

Yet today, instead of converging around shared global challenges, we are witnessing a fragmentation of priorities.

Climate change, pandemics, food insecurity, technological disruption, and persistent conflict all demand collective action.

But geopolitical tensions and armed conflicts are increasingly consuming political attention, financial resources, and institutional capacity.

As military expenditures rise globally, development financing is shrinking.

Resources that should be building peace, strengthening institutions, educating children, and creating opportunity are being redirected elsewhere.

The world has become highly efficient at financing war, but increasingly reluctant to invest in peace and development.

This trend should concern us all.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite these challenges, countries like Timor-Leste are not standing still.

We refuse to be passive victims of global events. Instead, we are investing in partnerships, strengthening regional cooperation, and contributing to a more peaceful and interconnected world.

Last year, Timor-Leste achieved a historic milestone by becoming the eleventh member of ASEAN. This reflects our firm belief that regional cooperation is one of the strongest safeguards against instability and one of the most effective pathways to peace and prosperity.

We are also preparing to assume the ASEAN Chairmanship in 2029.

In addition, Timor-Leste is a proud member of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), united by shared values and cooperation across continents.

At the global level, we are a founding member of the g7+, a coalition of conflict-affected countries across Africa, Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East, and the Caribbean.

The g7+ was created on a simple conviction: that countries which have experienced conflict can learn from one another and work together for peace.

For us, ASEAN, CPLP, and the g7+ are not merely institutions.

They are investments in peace and shared prosperity.

They demonstrate that peace is built NOT through dominance, but through partnership.

This raises a fundamental question:

What chance does peace have in a world increasingly defined by rivalry and retaliation?

If every conflict is met with escalation, the outcome is already known.

As the saying goes, “an eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind.”

The experience of G7+ countries is clear: peace requires reconciliation, courage, and long-term vision.

As someone who witnessed Timor-Leste’s own long struggle for freedom, I know reconciliation is not easy. I know it.

After 24 years of occupation, our people could have chosen bitterness.

Instead, we chose reconciliation. We chose coexistence. We chose to build a future, together.

Excellencies, dear friends,

We are living through a period of deep geopolitical fragmentation.

Multilateral institutions are increasingly constrained by strategic competition. Trust is eroding. Global solidarity is weakening.

History has already shown us the cost of confrontation.

During the Cold War, humanity came perilously close to catastrophe, learning the sobering reality of “Mutually Assured Destruction.”

We know that no nation—rich or poor, powerful, or weak—can be secure in a world defined by antagonism.

Today’s global challenges make this reality even more urgent.

Climate change does not respect borders.

Pandemics do not distinguish between nations.

Artificial intelligence raises risks that affect all of humanity.

These are existential challenges that demand cooperation.

Yet instead of unity, we are witnessing intensifying competition for geopolitical dominance.

Resources and attention are being diverted away from shared global problems toward rivalries that benefit few and endanger many.

This path does not lead to peace.

It leads to instability, division, and collective decline.

What the world urgently needs is a different vision.

A coalition for peace.

A coalition for cooperation.

A coalition for solidarity.

A coalition that recognises that our shared future depends not on who prevails over whom, but on whether humanity can work together to address common threats.

This is the responsibility we owe to future generations.

And it is precisely why the g7+ matters.

The g7+ is grounded in a simple truth. Those who have experienced war understand the value of peace more deeply than anyone else.

For more than a decade, it has been a voice for prevention, dialogue, and peaceful resolution of conflict.

It is a platform of solidarity among nations shaped by fragility and recovery.

We do NOT compete within it. We learn from one another.

We do NOT lecture. We share lived experience.

We speak NOT as competitors, but as partners in resilience.

This spirit of honesty and solidarity is what gives the g7+ its moral strength.

In a divided world, it offers a different message. A message of partnership. A message of hope.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

The world cannot afford another decade of declining peace.

We cannot allow geopolitical rivalry to undermine the hopes of millions striving for dignity and prosperity.

Let us call for restraint.

Let us invest in peace with the same urgency with which others invest in war.

And let us replace the arrogance of power with the humility of solidarity.

Because “no one is safe until everyone is safe.”

PEACE anywhere depends on PEACE everywhere.

Thank you very much.