

Timorese leader, at UN, calls on Asia to lead the way on climate change



José Ramos-Horta, President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, addresses General Assembly

25 September 2010 – Timorese President José Ramos-Horta today exhorted his fellow Asians to take the lead on tackling climate change, telling the General Assembly that his continent needs a common agenda to promote sustainable development, environmental protection and better land and water management.

Mr. Ramos-Horta **told** the third day of the Assembly's high-level debate that almost a year after countries failed to reach lasting agreement at a major summit in Copenhagen, there was a danger that no meaningful action will be taken and the planet's health will deteriorate rapidly.

"If we don't act now, in a few decades many hundreds of millions of fellow Asians will be uprooted and become climate refugees exacerbating existing tensions and conflicts," he said.

"We will kill each other over water, land and energy resources in addition to the decades-old border conflicts, religious and ethnic tensions and regional rivalries that have plagued our region."

The leader of Timor-Leste said Asia has the financial reserves as well as the collective scientific and technological expertise among its economists, planners, managers, scholars and designers to seriously confront the problems caused by climate change.

"Hence we call for an Asian common agenda on sustainable development anchored on environmental protection and recovery, on land and water management, health and education for all, on poverty and illiteracy education."

Mr. Ramos-Horta said Asians needed to stop playing the "blame game" and realize that innovation and greater investment in renewable energy are the only viable options for improving the environment.

"Asians must show greater wisdom and launch clean cities campaign everywhere, in every city, every town; we must stop commercial logging and the continuing destruction of our forests; we must replant, put back the hundreds of millions of trees that out of necessity or greed we took away from the soil and thus cause desertification, soil erosion, floods, landslides.

"We must stop dumping plastics and all forms of non-degradable material into our lakes, rivers and seas that destroy our rich coral life and fish stocks. We must turn waste into clean energy; we must stop wasting water."

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