



Presidência da República

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SPEECH BY
HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC
TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by congratulating the President of the General Assembly on his election and formulate my good wishes for the success of the work of this session in the year we mark the seventieth anniversary of the UN.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation for the work of the Secretary-General. As ever, you can continue to count on the support of Portugal.

The creation of the United Nations marked a unique moment in the collective history of humanity. The pursuit of lasting peace, development and respect for human rights, laid down the principles and objectives which we regard today, seventy years on, as one of the main achievements of the contemporary world.

The Charter of the United Nations and the principles and values it encapsulates continue to be a reference and a sign of hope for our collective future.

I welcome the adoption of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, an unparalleled opportunity to usher in an era in which poverty is eradicated, and leads to a world of justice and dignity for all.

2015 is also a key year for negotiations on climate change. Seventeen years after Kyoto, the international community must be ambitious in fighting against this particular threat to its sustainable development.

It is imperative that, in Paris, in December, we reach a lasting agreement that is global, fair and binding on all.

While closely related to climate change, the issue of the Oceans holds a crucial importance for Portugal in the light of its history, its geography and its identity.

In June this year, my country organised an international event on the Sea – the Blue Week - which brought together more than seventy countries and international institutions. It provided the occasion for an open debate and a strategic reflection on the challenges of global management of the oceans and the responsible use of their potential.

We continue to take a strong interest in deepening the multilateral dialogue on the sustainability of the oceans and enhancing the overall efforts of the United Nations.

Portugal had the honour to co-chair the UN Working Group to set up a reliable and detailed system of information on the marine environment. The publication of the first Global Ocean Assessment Report is a step in the right direction.

You can rely, Mr. President, on the engagement of Portugal in the preparation of a legally binding instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas that go beyond national jurisdiction.

Mr. President,

Portugal's course of actions has been geared towards the defence of the universal and individual nature of all human rights, not only civil and political rights but also economic, social and cultural rights.

Combatting violence against women takes on a clear priority in this context. I draw attention to the alarming number of cases of domestic violence across the most diverse societies and social strata, which cannot continue unpunished.

I invite all States to step up their efforts to put an end to this affliction and I hope this will be an indicator to be taken into account in the overall assessment of compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals.

I would also underline the importance we attach to Children's Rights, including the right to education, and to youth policies.

Mr President,

At a time when we are witnessing the proliferation of violent clashes in a number of regions, it must be emphasised that no conflict, no matter how complex it may be, may possibly justify barbarism, whether by States or by non-State parties. Human Rights are the common heritage of humankind that we all have an obligation to defend, regardless of geography.

The Security Council plays a key role in this context. In order to perform its mandate in the most effective manner, it should mirror the realities of our World. This implies extending membership in both categories, and re-examining its working methods.

The tragic humanitarian situation in Syria, Iraq, Libya and in many other conflict settings should prompt us to act in a supportive and responsible manner.

Some of these crises, particularly in Syria, have already claimed many thousands of human lives and give rise to one of the largest flows of refugees since the Second World War. Their resolution can no longer remain hostage to blockages which prolong and aggravate misery and suffering for vast populations.

In line with its consistently humanistic tradition, Portugal has demonstrated, from the very beginning, due solidarity, as shown by its availability to welcome several thousand people in need of international protection.

I take this opportunity to commend the High Commission for Refugees which has epitomised the humanitarian values enshrined in the UN Charter. The dignity of human life is an absolute value that we have an obligation to respect and protect.

On the other hand, for some years, we find ourselves faced with the threat of terrorism, which takes on more and more barbaric and worrying forms. This threat and its protagonists require strong, concerted responses and a determined fight by the international community.

Such responses should also address the underlying forces that lead to radicalisation and violent extremism, which require States, international organisations, religious communities and civil society organisations to be involved.

Mr. President,

I must also express our concern about the deadlock affecting the peace process in the Middle East. There will be no lasting peace without a fair resolution of the Palestinian issue which also ensures Israel's security. We urge the parties to resume the peace talks, as we are convinced that the only solution to the conflict will be the creation, based on the UN resolutions, of two states, living side by side in democracy, peace and security.

I welcome the agreement reached on Iran's nuclear programme. It is now up to all parties involved to ensure its full implementation.

Mr. President,

Africa holds a special place in Portuguese foreign policy. My country has key partners in Africa with whom it maintains close relations in the most varied fields,

ranging from political dialogue to economic links, from the approach to security issues to the establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships.

A number of African countries where Portuguese is the official language celebrate this year the 40th anniversary of their independence – namely Mozambique, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe and Angola – and Portugal and the Portuguese people are associated with this important historical event.

The situation in Guinea-Bissau deserves a particular reference. I trust its political leaders to recognise the essential value of political stability and the ability to working together in order to pursue with the necessary reforms, including in the security sector, in the fight against impunity and in socio-economic development projects.

That would be the required framework for the international community to be able to fulfil the commitments to cooperation made in March at the Brussels Conference. The democratic maturity that the people of Guinea-Bissau have demonstrated is sufficient reason for the international community to remain united and coordinated in supporting the country.

We also remain engaged on matters concerning maritime safety, especially in the Gulf of Guinea. We have participated in the development of international support strategies and have strengthened our bilateral cooperation with the African States and the regional organisations.

Mr. President,

Portugal is reinforcing its relationship with Latin American States. We have added to our historical and cultural ties a mutual willingness to know each other better and to deepen our political and economic relations.

I very much welcome the positive developments around the on-going peace negotiations in Colombia and the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the US.

Mr. President,

The Portuguese language is a global, economically relevant communication vehicle. About 250 million people express themselves in portuguese, from Asia to Europe, from Africa to Latin America, in their everyday lives, in commerce and business, and in culture and social networks.

It is also an official or a working language in several international organisations, including in some of the UN specialised agencies. The legitimate ambition of the CPLP is to see the Portuguese language recognised as an official language of the United Nations.

Mr. President,

As we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the UN, I reiterate the commitment expressed here in 2008: Portugal, sixty years now into its membership of the UN, remains firmly committed to an effective multilateralism. It participates in many peacekeeping operations, has been in the Security Council three times, is currently a member of the Human Rights Council and fiercely stands by the guiding principles of the Charter in its international actions.

In a globalised, interdependent world such as the one in which we live, only strong multilateral institutions can ensure the fundamental values of Peace, Human Rights, Sustainable Development, Democracy and Respect for International Law.

Thank you very much.