

PORTUGAL

**Statement by
His Excellency Mr. José Socrates
Prime Minister
of the Portuguese Republic**

**at the General Assembly
Sixty-fifth Session**

New York, 25 September 2010

(check against delivery)

Mr. President,

Secretary General,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My congratulations, Mr. President, for your election. You are now at the helm of the central body in the UN architecture. In this General Assembly we decide the composition and the procedures of other UN organs. Here, all Member States are represented and each one has a vote, irrespective of its dimension, its population or its economic power. Here, we are all permanent members, embodying the principle of sovereign equality of all states.

In taking part in this General Assembly, Portugal is guided by the objective of doing its best to reinforce the United Nations. There are no true alternatives to this organization. Its unique role in managing international relations is ever more evident. It is our task to enhance this role in order to attain a progressive and solid strengthening of the UN.

In international relations, Portugal is guided by the principles of national independence, respect for human rights, equality between states, peaceful solutions to conflicts and international cooperation as the main elements that drive development and progress of Humanity. These principles are all inscribed in the Portuguese Constitution.

And these are also the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. Allow me to underline some of them, which are today more important than ever: maintaining international peace and security; the development and progress of all peoples; friendly relations between all nations based on sovereign equality; international cooperation in solving economic, cultural or humanitarian crises; and the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. President,

Keeping peace and international security, avoiding war, is surely one of the noblest of our objectives. The Charter defines the way we, the United Nations, should act together to prevent or remove threats to peace and how to respond to acts of aggression or other violations of our universal principles.

Portugal has been an active contributor to UN peace-keeping and peace-building operations in Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania. Our effort has always been global and generous. Tens of thousands of Portuguese have participated in peace operations. We are now present in places as diverse as Afghanistan, Southern Lebanon, Timor-Leste, the Western Balkans, Chad or the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We participate in peace operations and other missions created by the UN according to our possibilities and, quite frequently, above and beyond what our dimension would

require. We keep on doing it nevertheless. With the sound conviction that collective security calls for collective efforts. And you can all continue counting on the Portuguese contribution to this collective endeavour.

Looking at the present challenges to peace and security, allow me to refer to the situation in the Middle East. A conflict with so many negative influences in the relations between several peoples and cultures. The coming year will be critical to the Peace Process and the choice is between peace and the return to instability. We welcome the return to direct negotiations in view of a two state solution. We all have to join efforts for the creation of an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian state living side by side, in mutual peace and security, with the state of Israel.

I would also like to mention Afghanistan, where the international community has assumed a firm commitment to support rebuilding and development. The results of the Kabul Conference will have to be complemented at the upcoming NATO Summit in Lisbon, ensuring a sustainable transition process, mainly led by the Afghans themselves.

Mr. President,

International peace and security require an effective multilateralism in the UN bodies. Effective multilateralism needs to be based on working structures with which every member state feels comfortable. The United Nations, Mr. President, is the Indispensable Organization! The only one capable of confronting global threats; the only one with the capacity to respond to acute natural catastrophes, as we have seen in several recent situations like the Haitian earthquake or the Pakistan floods; and the only one to shelter and feed in an effective manner millions of refugees worldwide, an outstanding work by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees led by António Guterres, one of the most distinguished Portuguese political leaders.

Multilateralism and international rule of law are interconnected. And this interconnection cannot be forgotten when we fight threats like terrorism. That is why the UN should be the central and dynamic platform to fight every form of international terrorism.

Mr. President,

It is especially urgent to reform the United Nations, adapting the organization to today's international realities. Any reform of the United Nations, must reinforce, not weaken, the objectives that presided over its creation. Its universalism has to be strengthened, its pivotal place at the nucleus of the international architecture has to be preserved. For the UN is the sole forum where nobody feels excluded, the sole body where all states, including small and middle sized countries, have their own voice and their own say in solving global problems.

The establishment of the Peace Building Commission – an idea put forward by Portugal was a significant step in the reform process. But we have also to look at the Security Council, enlarging its composition. I sincerely believe that we can all

succeed in reshaping the UNSC into a more representative, more transparent and more efficient body.

In our view it is illogical that countries like Brazil or India, that have today an irreplaceable economic and political role, are still not permanent members of the Security Council.

Africa as well has to be considered in this enlargement of the permanent membership. It is of utmost importance that Africa is fairly treated to take due account of the remarkable political and economic progresses that we all have witnessed in that vast continent to which we Portuguese feel a permanent solidarity and affinity. It is only natural that we have been so closely linked to the reinforcement of relations between Africa and Europe, having hosted in Lisbon the summit that deigned the Joint Strategy. We are now looking forward to the third Africa-EU summit.

Mr. President,

The implementation of the Millennium Development Goals is urgent. Let me congratulate the Secretary General and the member states for the results of the recent High Level Event. We are firmly committed to apply the agreed political vision to reach those objectives over the next five years.

International stability can not be achieved and maintained without economic and social prosperity worldwide. The present economic and financial situation shows that we all benefit from common solutions to global problems. In this context, I call for a reinforced participation of developing countries and regional groupings and communities in ongoing debates, including the reform of the international financial organizations and their interaction with the UN system.

Another field where interdependency urges us toward joint action is climate change. It is a question of survival! We shall contribute to make sure that Cancun is a step in the right direction. Portugal has been consistently working to reduce its carbon footprint by investing solidly in renewable energies. We are proud to have already met the objective announced here last year: my country is already producing 45% of its electricity from local renewable sources. Our objective is to reach 60%. We are today second in the world in the use of renewables in the energy mix.

Portugal has been cooperating and sharing this experience and this knowledge with several developing countries, solidly supporting the efforts of adaptation and mitigation, in the context of the goals agreed in Copenhagen. Some of these countries are Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. These countries are among those that pollute the least but are the ones that suffer the most with climate change. It is urgent, Mr. President, to take the measures required to mitigate their vulnerabilities.

This year marks the beginning of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification. As a country vulnerable to desertification, we are especially sensitive to the implementation of the UN Convention by the most affected states.

Portugal recognizes the right to water, as well as the right to education, adequate housing and health. Ensuring that every human being has access to drinking water and sanitation is also a good way of accelerating the implementation of the MDGs.

Mr. President,

My country, an independent state for almost a thousand years, commemorates this year the centennial of the Portuguese Republic. We are today a democracy with solid credentials in human rights and their worldwide promotion. We firmly believe in the rule of law, and have learned, through our own experience, that peace and prosperity are attainable objectives only when they are truly and freely shared by all states.

Portugal is also a country that is accustomed to listen to its partners. We are members of the EU, the Atlantic Alliance, the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, currently presided by Angola, and whose members, spread over four continents, share the 5th most spoken language in the world. We are also members of the ibero-american group, presently chaired by Argentina, and part of the Alliance of Civilizations, a forum that is at the forefront of the much needed intercultural and inter-regional dialogue, ably led by Jorge Sampaio, former Portuguese President.

Our conduct in the UN is rooted in our capacity for open dialogue with every member state, in our ability to build bridges and forge consensus. We always seek to defend our values through dialogue and not by imposing our views. Thereby, our attitude is not driven by any temporary need to please some constituencies. We aspire to be judged by our actions. This is our motivation to seek active participation in all the UN bodies of rotational composition. This universal vision of dialogue and openness to the world presides over our current candidature to a non-permanent seat in the Security Council.

Mr. President,

We are part of the United Nations because we strongly believe in its values and objectives. In its universality. Because we believe that mutual respect should be the corner stone of international action. And because we think that the strengthening of the United Nations and its activities is surely one of the most noble and generous objectives of all those striving, each and every day, for a better world.

Thank you very much.