



Speech of His Excellency the President of the Republic

**Mr. Jorge Carlos de Almeida Fonseca, in the General Debate of the
76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, under the
theme:**

*"Building resilience through hope - to recover from COVID-19, rebuild
sustainability, respond to the needs of the planet, respect people's rights
and revitalize the United Nations".*

- New York, September 22, 2021 -

Ladies and Gentlemen Heads of State and Government

Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the General Assembly

Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Heads of Delegation,

Excellencies,

International relations, diplomacy in general, the major world and United Nations conferences in particular, have accustomed us to traditional meetings marked by the uniqueness of physical presence and effusion among participants.

Face-to-face meetings, handshakes, hugs, dialogues in the halls, negotiations in bilateral or small committees have always been the soul

of these meetings of the International Community, which were left behind almost two years ago due to the mandatory use of online and digital communications.

The fact that we are meeting in person on the occasion of the General Debate of this 76th Session of the General Assembly should be interpreted as a sign of our collective determination to do everything possible to overcome the scourge of the COVID 19 pandemic, on the path to better reconstruction and a more resilient world.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Excellencies,

It is in this positive spirit that I begin my speech, greeting, on behalf of the People of Cabo Verde, all the other Peoples of the United Nations represented here by their highest dignitaries, with wishes for progress and well-being for all.

I would like to present my tribute to Mr. Volkan Bozkir, from Turkey, the outgoing President of the General Assembly, for the way in which he performed his duties amidst the difficulties that we all know.

I welcome the election of Mr. Abdulla Shahid as President of the 76th Session of the General Assembly and I am pleased that, him being from the Maldives and the sixth President from a Small Island Developing State like Cabo Verde, it is a sign of inclusion of our multilateral system. I further congratulate the President-elect for having chosen hope as the symbol of his presidency. In our history, in Cabo Verde, we have always

chosen the optimism of hope against the pessimism of resignation. And in fact, today, in the face of the exponential pandemic challenge we face, hope is the way, especially if we know how to act quickly, together and in solidarity.

I also address my most cordial greetings and words of appreciation to the Secretary General and my dear friend, António Guterres. First, because, halfway through the previous session, he ended his first mandate with honors for having accomplished and, above all, for having been a champion in mobilizing the United Nations and the world in the fight against the pandemic and its devastating effects, particularly in defending the unique need for universal and more equitable access to vaccines against COVID 19. Secondly, I am glad for your re-election as a renewed vote of confidence from the United Nations community to continue the work you have done so far. Finally, I congratulate you on the publication, on September 10, of an excellent report entitled "Our Common Agenda", with which you inaugurate your second mandate.

More than responding to what was asked of him, in the sense of guiding the responses to the commitments of the Declaration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the Secretary General, in this proposal of a Common Agenda, offers us his vision of the future of the world and the role of the United Nations in that context. A future that depends on our collective choice of continuing down the path of destruction caused by COVID 19, climate change and the erosion of human rights, or the option of resuming the ascent to progress, inclusion, environmental

sustainability and our development, including through an effective United Nations system that gives meaning to multilateralism.

Let me tell you, Mr. Secretary General, that Cabo Verde has no doubts about the future it wants. That is why you can count on our country in this journey, in particular, aiming at the goals you want to undertake and finding the solutions you want to achieve, with your proposal to hold the "Summit of the Future", as you recommend in " Our Common Agenda", namely, "to forge a new global consensus on what our future should look like and how we can ensure it".

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cabo Verde is a small island country, scattered across the Atlantic Sahelian belt. It is also a great nation, combining the resident population and its vast diaspora, spread across the four corners of the world, but with the heart planted in Cabo Verde.

After the historical period of dependence, slavery and colonization, independence gave us the hope of being able to make our own choices, placing this responsibility primarily in our own hands. To support us in this process, we chose the paths of multilateralism, international cooperation, and strategic partnerships for our dynamic insertion in the global world. We have chosen, also on this path that has led us to democracy for thirty years, good governance based on the Rule of Law,

Peace, Security, the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Gender Parity and Inclusion, and the Fight against Poverty and Inequality.

In that line of progress, in 2008 we graduated from the list of the least advanced countries to a middle-income country. We achieved most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015, as well as made our choice to align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to that end, we adopted the Strategic Sustainable Development Plan (SDSP).

The emergence of COVID 19 pandemic, especially its health, economic, and social impact, in a brutal way, has deconstructed the economy that had been growing at about 6%, attacking the mainstays sectors such as tourism, transportation, and domestic demand, causing the lack of social protection, unemployment, and increased poverty; deregulating the fundamentals of the macro economy, such as inflation, budget deficit, debt, and a plummeting economic growth, in short, generating a recession never before experienced, translating into a 14.8% reduction.

My country did not react with resignation, but with determination, taking all of the internationally recommended anti-crisis measures immediately and in the short term. For the medium and long term, we carried out a participatory strategic planning exercise to define a common vision for 2030, entitled Cabo Verde Ambition 2030, in order to resume the process of sustainable development and to better rebuild from the lessons learned and opportunities that emerged from the crisis, including in terms of access to concessional financing and attracting foreign direct investment, which continue to be the greatest obstacles in this direction.

As mentioned in the PEDS and Ambition 2030 documents, Cabo Verde's purposes are to strengthen its alignment with the values and interests defended by multilateralism and a rules-based world order, with an effective United Nations at its center. Such purposes require Cabo Verde's continuous affirmation as a safe country and a useful and credible partner in the performance of a diplomacy up to the new challenges of the world in which it is inserted.

At the present juncture, Cabo Verde's first priority is to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. Important and consistent gains have been registered, both in the reduction of transmission rates and in the vaccination rate of the eligible population, which has already reached 74%, with at least one dose, and our goal is to reach 85%, of the eligible population, fully immunized, by the end of October of this year.

This success would not have been possible without the perseverance and determination that characterize the Cabo Verdean leaders and people, as well as the strengthening of the worldwide solidarity of all partners, namely the COVAX. Our warmest thanks to all.

The economic recovery remains, in parallel, an important priority for Cabo Verde, mainly through the recovery of the tourism sector and related economies. The reciprocal recognition of vaccination certificates and the revision of travel warnings are measures that Cabo Verde has been working on with public and private partners, and international guidelines in this regard can only support and encourage the return of tourism.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cabo Verde has structurally all the characteristics of a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), namely the physical smallness and dispersion in islands, immersion in large oceanic spaces and remoteness from major markets that weaken its economic base, accentuate its exposure to climate change and other environmental phenomena such as drought, as well as reduce resilience to natural phenomena and other external shocks. Within this framework, the manifestations and impact of COVID 19, only exacerbated the pre-existing conditions, making the SIDS the most affected by the pandemic.

Cabo Verde is a member, within the United Nations, of the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS), which has been advocating for SIDS, global and differentiated international support measures, recommended since the Rio Conference in 1992. In this context, the study, debate and the desirable adoption by international consensus of the so-called Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) applicable to SIDS, with respect to the three dimensions of sustainable development, that is economic, social and environmental, should be able to help both in the classification of the level of development of each one, and in the eligibility to such differentiated support measures, thus allowing the effective implementation of the commitments established in the SAMOA Pathway.

SIDS, in each of the three geographic regions of insertion, from the Pacific, the Caribbean, and around Africa to Southeast Asia, have sectors

that offer opportunities for economic growth in areas of natural resources, tourism, and the blue economy, among others. Measures to support growth and economic competitiveness in such growth areas, support for climate adaptation and resilience building, facilities to support direct investment and general and climate finance, are examples of measures that should be taken globally towards SIDS and tailored to each in particular.

Finally, SIDS, their problems, challenges and solutions, should be present at the Future Summit announced by the Secretary General, as part of the problems, but also as part of the solutions. And the opportunity is offered to us to make decisions that meet the specificities and legitimate interests and aspirations of this group of countries, among the most vulnerable of the United Nations Family, leaving none behind.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The maintenance of international peace and security was at the core of the creation of the UN. For Cabo Verde, the values Liberty, Peace, Democracy and Political Stability are fundamental to building more just, peaceful and inclusive societies.

In the face of global challenges, we are increasingly aware of the imperative of this fundamental objective of the Peoples who signed the Charter of the United Nations. We are also aware that the political instability plaguing the most diverse regions and the insecurity

aggravated by violent extremism and transnational crime are barriers to development and peaceful coexistence among nations.

The desired effective performance of the United Nations requires regular and consistent reforms of its main bodies. We recognize the progress achieved so far with the reforms in its development pillar, making the UN System more efficient. Progressive and innovative has been the process of revitalizing the General Assembly, allowing it to be more pragmatic in its deliberations.

We also understand that the revitalization of the UN goes through the need for a reform of the Security Council, which can give a greater range of Member States in decision making related to international peace and security. As a member of the African Union, Cabo Verde subscribes to the Ezulwini consensus.

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The history of the world has been a succession of crises and new opportunities for progress, looking towards the future.

With the ongoing crisis caused by the pandemic of COVID 19, we have often reflected and pointed out that it is also a crisis of opportunity, challenging both the present and future generations with responsibility, young people first and foremost.

As a crisis, the pandemic has destroyed lives, compromised health care, disrupted economies and social protection systems, reduced educational and employment opportunities for youth, and increased poverty and inequality, exposing the most fragile more to the effects of climate change and weakening them further.

But we have also witnessed the opportunities that have arisen from fighting the Pandemic, or arising from the search for solutions, with the use of technologies to minimize the effects of physical distance in communication, administration, education, entertainment, diplomatic practice and business, to monitor the advance of transmission, the role of science in its race to obtain a vaccine in record time, in the multiple forms of creativity and adaptation and response to the present time, in many other fields of activity.

However, the COVID 19 crisis is also part of a chain of other crises such as climate change, geopolitical conflicts, and criminal insecurity, and their interconnectedness results in an accentuation of the gap between the haves and have-nots, both nationally and internationally, particularly with regard to access to the vaccine for all and the financial conditions and means to rebuild better.

The missing link between crisis and opportunity lies in the exercise of greater global solidarity to make real possible solutions that can build the "Future we want" as well as the "United Nations we need". For both to happen or not, the action of any State, individually, will not be enough, but both perfectly achievable, through collective action or the vast majority.

"The Future we want" was always inscribed in the United Nations Charter through the goals aiming at (more) Peace and Security, Protection and Promotion of Human Rights and International Cooperation for the achievement of economic, social and cultural progress for all, depending on the effective implementation of these same goals.

On the other hand, the "United Nations we need" has always been a debate between what it should do and what the Organization can, in effect, deliver, the difference lying in collective action that can bring power as close as possible to duty. The results achieved so far by the United Nations System could be vastly increased or improved in all areas, from sustained Peace to sustainable Development.

The "Future we want" for this depends on our ability to seize the opportunities born of the pending crises.

The Way forward is multilateralism, revisited and strengthened, to meet today's great challenges, and the venue for this new beginning may well be the Future Summit.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me, before I conclude, to make a more personal statement.

As I am at the end of my second mandate and my country is due to hold presidential elections on October 17, this is the last time I will appear before you, in this Great Assembly, as President of the Republic of Cabo Verde.

I will keep the best memories of this United Nations House, and I would like to reiterate here my total commitment to continue defending and promoting, with you, the inalienable values of Freedom, Democracy, Human Rights and Peace!

Thank you very much.

Jorge Carlos de Almeida Fonseca