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# PORTUGAL

Address

by

His Excellency Ambassador José Filipe Moraes Cabral  
Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations

at the General Debate of the  
67th session of the United Nations General Assembly

New York, 1 October 2012

*(Please check against delivery)*



Mister President of the General Assembly,  
Mister Secretary General,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mister President, I congratulate you for your election. This election represents one more important step in an already illustrious career, as well as an historic moment for Serbia which recognizes its courageous efforts to overcome a difficult recent past and to proceed, with determination, toward European integration.

Allow me also to express a word of recognition to Ambassador Nassir Al-Nasser for his successful leadership of this Assembly in a particularly demanding year.

And to our Secretary General, praise and support for his notable work, in particular for his efforts to promote peace in a context of great challenges.

Mister President,

As we are three months away from concluding our mandate in the Security Council, to which we were elected by a significant majority of the member states here represented, we consider it appropriate to present an assessment to this Assembly.

We fulfilled the mandate with which we were confided both with rigor and transparency, always seeking to reinforce the credibility and efficiency of that organ entrusted with the protection of international peace and security.

We guided ourselves by the same principles that always oriented our foreign policy and that deserved the trust of this Assembly: the defense of the primacy of International Law, the search for effective multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations in the international architecture.

With equal coherence and firm resolve we have defended the promotion of Human Rights, the role of women, the protection of civilians, the strengthening of action defending children against violence and their protection in the context of armed conflict.

Sustainable development, the fight against poverty, food security, and the particularly devastating effects of climate change on Small Island Developing States, that threatens their very existence, remain, for Portugal, fundamental pillars for our action within the United Nations.

With equal perseverance, we sought to strengthen the role of the Security Council in the fight against new challenges to international peace and security such as organized crime, the proliferation of illicit trafficking, terrorism and pandemics; its capacity to prevent conflicts and for mediation as well as the Council's better articulation with regional and sub-regional organizations.

We played an active role, and continue to do so, in the collective efforts to overcome the crises faced, as was the case in the Ivory Coast, Libya and Yemen, or the current challenges in Syria, Guinea-Bissau and Mali.

Our actions were always driven by openness for dialogue and a constructive and balanced attitude, embodying to our vocation to build bridges and generate consensus, without abdicating from our values and principles. We hope to have lived up to the high expectations and trust deposited in us.

We sought, while Presidency of the relevant Committee, to improve the internal working methods of the Council as well as its articulation with this Assembly, with a view to making it more efficient, open and in harmony with our times. We will present a report to this General Assembly on the work undertaken on this issue.

It is important, however, to recognize that the credibility of the Security Council is also underpinned by a need for its composition to reflect the current geo-political reality, one that is quite different from the dynamic in 1945.

It is increasingly difficult for us, as it is for many others, to see that the increasing role of Brazil and India in the international scene has not yet been acknowledged with permanent seats on the Security Council, or that Africa is the only continent without a permanent seat on the Council.

Mister President,

The Security Council continues to confront serious obstacles.

The number of victims in Syria increases exponentially day by day. We are impotent witnesses to a true humanitarian catastrophe and a generalized and systemic violation of the most basic rights of the Syrian people.

In addition, this catastrophe could have been avoided had the Syrian Government not chosen military force and brutal repression in response to the legitimate manifestations from its people, thereby systematically excluding any possibility of a politically negotiated outcome to the crisis.

There is no alternative other than a political solution. A solution that goes toward the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and that allows for a democratic transition driven by the Syrians themselves and one in which they see themselves reflected.

Increased militarization of the conflict will undoubtedly lead to even more suffering for the civilian population, threaten the territorial integrity of Syria and increase the risks of destabilization for its neighbors and, indeed, the regional as a whole.

The nomination of Lahdar Brahimi as the Joint United Nations and Arab League Envoy, whom we greatly respect, should be seen as a new opportunity for the parties to revisit their options, to cease the violence and to seriously engage in a process of political transition.

For the Joint Envoy's mission to be a success, the Security Council will finally have to exert joint, continued and efficient pressure on all parties, and most certainly on the Syrian authorities who have primary responsibility for the current situation.

The impasse in finding a durable solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict is also of great concern and an increasingly urgent issue in light of the recent developments in the Middle East and North Africa and the fight of its peoples for liberty, democracy and dignity.

There will be no lasting peace, no stability and no security in the Middle East without a solution to the question of Palestine.

We understand and share Israel's legitimate security aspirations. Yet we also understand and share the frustration of the Palestinian people, for whom an independent Palestinian state is not simply an inalienable right, but also a straightforward question of justice.

Only a global deal that solves the pending questions, negotiated directly by the parties on the basis of the United Nations resolutions and internationally recognized parameters, which consecrates a two State solution living side by side in peace will both respond to the security concerns laid down by Israel and the aspirations of the Palestinian people for independence, liberty and dignity.

We appeal to the Israelis and Palestinians to quickly restart direct negotiations.

Another regional issue still suffering an impasse that is of serious concern in the Middle East is the question of a nuclear Iran. We regret the absence of any positive development on this issue despite the significant diplomatic efforts underway coupled with mechanisms of international pressure. The onus of this situation is in Tehran.

Mister President,

In Africa, we are faced with a grave situation in the Sahel, and particularly in Mali, which threatens the whole region and could spread throughout western Africa, putting both stability and development at risk in a number of countries.

Within the tapestry of historical, economic and social causes, we are witness to an exponential growth in terrorism, with increasing links to organized transnational crime, to drugs and to other sorts of illicit trafficking.

Here too the international community should be more active. In this context, we support the outcome of the recent High Level Meeting on the Sahel that contributed to the creation of an integrated international strategy for the region.

It is within this grave regional background in which we find the crisis in Guinea-Bissau. The military coup of 12 April interrupted a democratic electoral process, violating the principles defended by the United Nations, as was clearly recognized by the adoption of resolution 2048 of the Security Council.

It is imperative to restore the constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau. This requires the nomination of an inclusive Government which includes the PAIGC, the party holding the majority in the National Assembly; the possibility for the return of the legitimate leaders, without restrictions on their civil and political rights and the organization of free and credible elections. Any and all solutions to the present crisis will have to respect international legality and the constitutional order of Guinea-Bissau, as well as translate into an internal, inclusive, and credible political process capable of creating national stability.

To this end, coordinated action by the international community - the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, CPLP and the EU – is essential for this process. Portugal is fully engaged and available to work with all interested parties on this process.

It is inconceivable that in the XXIst Century, democratically elected African leaders are pushed aside by force and are made to live outside their countries. It is up to all of us to defend the principles of the Charter and to apply without any ambiguities the principle of Zero tolerance in these situations.

In this context, I note the increasingly relevant role of the African Union, in close coordination with the United Nations, in the promotion and protection of peace and security on the African continent. I take advantage of this opportunity to also congratulate Mrs. Dlamini-Zuma for her election as President of the Commission. This represents also a milestone in the strengthening of the role of women in Africa, with which we are also very satisfied.

Mister President,

Allow me also to refer to a success case and a good example – Timor Leste. A successful example thanks firstly to the Timorese themselves, but also due to the efficient support by the United Nations.

The integrated United Nations Mission in Timor-Leste will conclude its mandate at the end of the year. It will do so with a sense of mission accomplished thanks to the maturity shown by the Timorese people over the last years, exemplified by the successful Presidential and Legislative elections held just a few months ago.

A new cycle of cooperation between the international community and Timor-Leste is now open, in line with the priorities defined by that country's government. In this context, Portugal will continue to support Timor-Leste on its path to economic and social developments, the strengthening of its institutions and democratic values, as well as the Rule of Law and in the promotion of the human rights of the Timorese people.

Timor-Leste, like Guinea-Bissau, is a member state of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, alongside Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Mozambique and Sao Tome and Principe.

Within the CPLP we share a common language and history, but we also develop shared efforts toward the defense of universal values, through active multilateralism in the framework of the United Nations and the regional organizations to which we belong.

The significance of the Portuguese language as a language of global communications, of business and of culture, with about 250 million speakers, is an advantage for the international community. For this reason we will continue to work together to have Portuguese recognized as an official language of the United Nations.

Mister President,

I am wrapping up.

I referred in the beginning of this statement to Portugal's commitment to multilateralism as the most efficient means for finding common solutions to the global challenges which we face.

I specifically noted our efforts in the defense of Human Rights and in the promotion of sustainable development. In this context, we support the outcomes achieved at the Rio Conference thanks, in part, to the notable efforts of the Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and of the Brazilian Government.

We continue to defend the universal, indivisible and interdependent rights of all human beings, be they political, economic, social or cultural. We have solid commitment to humanitarian law and to the excellent work of the High Commissioner for Refugees.

In this context, committed to defend and promote Human Rights and with the same sense of responsibility with which we undertook our current mandate in the Security Council, Portugal is a candidate for the Human Rights Council for the years 2015-2017. We hope to be able to deserve, once again, the trust of this Assembly and to serve, for the first time, in this body.

The changes in today's world call for the promotion of a culture of dialogue, at a global scale, of tolerance and respect for human dignity. The United Nations should continue at the vanguard of these efforts, namely through initiatives such as the Alliance of Civilizations. I congratulate the High Representative for his leadership and work in the defense of peace and of a better understanding between peoples. Indeed, the dialogue between different cultures, civilizations and religions is at the very heart of the work of the United Nations.

In conclusion, today, as in the past, the United Nations has to reflect upon what it is and what we collectively want it to be. It should translate the indispensable convergence of the common will of States into actions that contribute to a better world. Whose central objective should be the maintenance of international peace and security and a greater prosperity for all. Portugal stands steadfast in its commitment to these efforts.

Thank you.

