



**MISSÃO PERMANENTE DE PORTUGAL  
JUNTO DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS EM NOVA IORQUE**

**Statement by**

**His Excellency Mr. Rui Machete**

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**at the General Debate of the  
68<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly**

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*(Please check against delivery)*

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

As I take the floor for the first time before this prestigious Assembly, the headquarters of international legitimacy and multilateralism, I would like to begin by reiterating Portugal's firm and unwavering commitment to the United Nations, its Charter, and the values and principles that guide its action.

Mr. President, I congratulate you on your election. Your long international career and the vast experience you have acquired in the UN system place you in a privileged position to preside over the central organ of our Organization. Your election reflects the recognition, by all Member States, of the strong commitment to the United Nations and to multilateralism by Antigua and Barbuda, the Caribbean Community and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

I would like to convey my country's acknowledgment of the dynamism and dedication with which the President of the previous session of the General Assembly, Mr. Vuk Jeremic, performed his duties.

I wish also to express special appreciation for our Secretary General's untiring work in the defence of peace during such a challenging period for the International Community. As always, the Secretary General, will continue to count on Portugal's support.

Mr. President

I take this opportunity to strongly condemn the **terrorist attack** which occurred in Nairobi and to deliver a message of solidarity to the authorities and the people of Kenya. Acts such as these remind us that the efforts to combat terrorism continue to be of paramount importance. We will not live in a world of peace, liberty or in an environment of tolerance and mutual respect until we eradicate terrorism.

Mr. President,

Our organization was created to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”, basing its action on the “faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person”.

The United Nations has done much, during its 68 years, to achieve those objectives globally. Unfortunately, in many regions those purposes remain an illusion.

That is unfortunately the case in **Syria**, where the horrors of war and the unspeakable suffering of the population are now prevailing features.

The images that reach us on a daily basis are devastating and show a country that is physically destroyed. The numbers speak for themselves: over 100.000 dead; almost 7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance; 4 million internally displaced and 2 million refugees. The scale of this tragedy is the result of serious and systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, aggravated by the recent – and unacceptable – use of chemical weapons: something which we believed had been universally banished forever.

The world was shocked with the use of chemical weapons in Ghouta, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August. I want to be very precise on this. The use of chemical weapons represents a violation of international law, a heinous crime and a civilization regression. We cannot stand idle in the face of the violation of the barrier between civilization and barbarism, which the international community had vowed never to cross again.

Once more we, the members of this Assembly, are facing a serious international crisis, while at the same time we are in a position to reaffirm the centrality of the United Nations in solving it.

It was the absence of the United Nations in the phase of prevention and control – with a blocked and powerless Security Council – that allowed the Syrian crisis to reach these dramatic and unacceptable political and humanitarian proportions. We would have certainly had less casualties and refugees and surely we would not be managing an international crisis of great proportions as a consequence of the use of chemical weapons. Now, as an agreement was reached to remove, once and for all, the threat posed by the chemical arsenal of the Syrian regime, the international community has

again turned to the Security Council of the United Nations. I would like to salute the enormous political and diplomatic efforts by the USA and Russia, with the involvement of the Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi. The commitment and spirit of compromise they demonstrated and put into this process enabled an important agreement and the adoption yesterday of a Security Council Resolution that – hopefully - will ensure its implementation.

The Security Council, in close articulation with the OPCW, has taken up its Charter responsibilities, finally opening the prospect of hope for a global political solution for the Syrian question. It is now fundamental that we seize the opportunity created by the initiative on chemical weapons to consolidate the political-diplomatic track and hold the “Geneva II Conference”.

However, the primary responsibility for solving the Syrian crisis lies with the parties to the conflict. Without their will and commitment, no political solution will be possible. The international community must keep up the pressure on the parties, particularly on Damascus, with a view to a peaceful and sustainable democratic future, in which the diversity of the Syrian society feels represented.

Mr President,

Recently the Middle East has also seen some positive developments, as the **peace process between Israel and Palestine** has been relaunched.

I want to reaffirm before this Assembly Portugal’s full support for this process and I congratulate the United States of America for their initiative, as well as the Palestinian and Israeli authorities for the courage and leadership shown in their decision to resume negotiations.

There will be no lasting peace, stability, or security in the Middle East without solving the question of Palestine. This opportunity to ensure security for all and, finally, justice for the Palestinians, and must not be missed.

Before us lies a unique opportunity to find a peaceful solution, on the basis of United Nations resolutions and internationally agreed parameters, which consecrates a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State while addressing the security concerns of Israel.

We also follow with great concern the prolonged deadlock in the search for a solution to the **Iranian nuclear issue**. Despite all diplomatic efforts and pressure by the international community, it is regrettable that no solid progress has been made so far. Nevertheless, we take good note of the statements by Iranian high ranking officials in the last days and weeks, in particular those by President Hassan Rouhani before this Assembly, which we view as positive signs.

I appeal to the Iranian authorities that these encouraging political signals be translated into concrete steps conducive to a negotiated solution which will restore the confidence of the international community in the civilian and peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.

Mr. President,

Another issue of concern is the situation in the **Republic of Guinea-Bissau**, where the constitutional order continues to be subverted since the April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012, coup d'état .

As a Member of the European Union, of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries and of the United Nations, and in close coordination with the CEDEAO, as well as through bilateral measures, Portugal is keeping up its efforts to help the people of Guinea-Bissau overcome the current crisis. Portugal acknowledges the work carried out by the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Mr. Ramos Horta, to promote dialogue between the main political actors with a view to restoring the constitutional order. The formation of an inclusive Government was, in that sense, a step forward.

However the restoration of constitutional order and the subsequent normalization of Guinea-Bissau's relations with the International community demands the organization of Presidential and Legislative elections, in accordance with the commitments undertaken by the current Bissau-Guinean authorities and as reiterated by the Security Council Statement of 11 September. We are, however, very concerned with the possibility being raised of a possible new extension of the transitional period.

The international community also needs to make clear that for the elections to be free, fair and transparent, the current authorities must guarantee that all Guinean citizens, without exception, can participate in those elections, in full enjoyment of their rights, including the rights of freedom of expression and association. Only new authorities, enjoying the legitimacy resulting from a free popular vote and appointed in accordance

with the Constitution. can promote the long overdue reforms in the security, administration and justice sectors.

The crisis in Guinea-Bissau also has clear and worrying connections with the **Sahel** region, namely through drug trafficking routes. Europe, especially the Southern countries, follows the situation in the Sahel with particular concern. I can assure you we will continue supporting all efforts towards the stabilization of the region. In this context, the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel represents a major contribution.

Mr. President,

Portugal holds the co-Presidency of the “**Western Mediterranean Forum**”, known as the “5+5 Initiative”, which brings together 10 countries of the northern and southern coasts of the Mediterranean. The dialogue and the trust-building that this informal instrument provides is an important added-value for its members and for the Mediterranean region. We are, therefore, engaged in exploring all of its potential for cooperation.

Mr. President,

The Charter of the United Nations upholds the need “to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples”.

In the noble spirit of the United Nations, and following the historical and inspiring establishment, in 2000, of the **Millennium Development Goals**, the current session of the General Assembly will be a critical launching pad for the definition of the priorities and the path we shall follow in our common efforts towards the 2015 Summit, where we will adopt the principles and goals in the field of development for the coming years.

I commend you, Mr. President, for the timeliness of the choice of theme for this General Debate. I had the opportunity to participate in the Special Event on the Millennium Development Goals on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September which allowed us to thoroughly discuss the progress achieved to date on the MDGs and to provide important guidance for our future work.

It is our conviction that the current Millennium Development Goals should serve as the reference point for establishing the new development agenda, which should maintain the

focus on poverty reduction and sustainable development in all its dimensions, giving a special attention to the needs of the Least Developed Countries.

A broader, more inclusive and strategic vision is, however, required. We must go beyond the traditional relationship between donors and recipients through the creation of partnerships with the involvement of new international actors. Different modalities of assistance, new sources of financing, a reinforced principle of shared responsibility, leadership and ownership by developing countries are, for Portugal, the main guiding principles for the post-2015 development agenda.

The inaugural meeting of the **High Level Political Forum** was of great political significance. Portugal remains committed to ensuring that the Forum acts as a catalyst for international efforts in this area, ensuring a more efficient and coherent link between the different processes in the field of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Also in the framework of the outcome of the Rio+20 Conference, I would like to stress the progress in the field of **oceans**, a crucial issue for a maritime country such as Portugal. We welcome the commitment made by the Member States of the United Nations to discuss the issue of the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. In this context, Portugal is strongly in favor of the negotiation and adoption of an international instrument in the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Mr. President,

Reforms and institutional innovations such as the ones I just mentioned represent important changes in the architecture of the United Nations, adapting and preparing it for new times and new challenges.

However, the reform of our Organization will never be complete without **Security Council reform**, which includes its methods of work and, most of all, its composition. It is increasingly difficult to justify why countries such as Brazil and India are not permanent members of the Council. As stated in previous occasions, Portugal is of the view that Africa also deserves permanent representation in that body. Africa must be

treated with justice and in a way reflecting its size, its economic growth and its weight in the today's world.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the African Union and its Member States for the 50th anniversary of the Continent's regional organization.

Mr. President,

Portugal firmly believes that multilateralism and the United Nations are "a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of common ends".

We contribute actively to the work of our organization through a committed participation in its bodies but we have not yet had a mandate in the **Human Rights Council**. Therefore, we hope to be able to count on the support of this Assembly in the elections for that body which will take place in 2014.

Portugal enjoys a wide internal consensus on human rights which is translated into a broad range of freedoms, liberties and guarantees enshrined in our Constitution. We also recognize and support the universal, indivisible and interdependent nature of all human rights.

We trust that the work we have undertaken in this field will be worthy of the recognition of this Assembly. In effect, Portugal:

- Is a party to most international human rights legal instruments;
- Has a long standing record of promotion, within multilateral frameworks, of economic, social and cultural rights, women's and children's rights, the right to education, youth rights and the right to water and sanitation;
- Has sought systematically, during its last mandate as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, in 2011-2012, to promote and uphold a human rights perspective;
- Has accepted and implemented virtually all of the 86 recommendations which resulted from the 2009 Universal Periodic Review. And we will submit to a new UPR in 2014.



In case we are worthy of the trust of this Assembly and elected for the 2015-2017 triennium:

- We will fulfill our mandate with a deep conviction that the United Nations human rights protection system should remain strong, independent, impartial and demanding, and that, in this regard, we should always resolve to aim higher.
- We will continue to abide by the approach followed as members of the Security Council, characterized by openness to dialogue and by a constructive and balanced attitude, seeking to build bridges and generate consensus, without relinquishing to values and fundamental principles.

Mr. President,

The Portuguese language is the common element of unity that brings together the diversity of States of the **Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP)**. We are a Community of eight countries, with about 250 million speakers spread around four continents. Portuguese is the third most spoken European language in the world, with a growing role and status in the international scene, both as a vehicle of communication and as an economic language, used in trade and business, culture and social networks.

This coming October, Lisbon will host the II Conference on the Status of the Portuguese Language. On this occasion participants will consider the challenges faced by their common language.

Portuguese is currently the official or working language of several international organizations, namely specialized agencies of the United Nations. The CPLP has the ambition and the goal of having Portuguese adopted as an official language of the United Nations.

I take this opportunity to salute the Mozambican Presidency of the CPLP and the efforts undertaken towards reinforcing and deepening our Community.

I conclude by wishing the greatest success for the General Assembly session which is just starting. You may count on Portugal's steadfast defense of international law and commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes while defending and promoting Human Rights with the purpose of achieving more prosperity for all.

I thank you, Mr. President.

