



**Statement by H.E.Mr. Jorge Carlos De Almeida Fonseca,  
President of the Republic of Cabo Verde  
on the occasion of 73<sup>rd</sup> Session of the General Debate of General Assembly**

New York, 26<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Honorable Heads of State and Government,

Mrs. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the United Nations General Assembly,

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

Honorable Heads of Delegation,

Excellencies

Warm greetings to the Madam President of the General Assembly, and congratulations on your election. I wish you much success as you embark on your noble and challenging mission.

I also congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajcak, from the Republic of Slovakia, the outgoing President of the General Assembly, for his excellent work during his term.

I would further like to express my utmost appreciation to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. António Guterres, for his smart and competent stewardship of the directions of our common house, and to reaffirm our full trust and profound respect for his leadership, particularly amid the many difficulties that the world currently faces.

I am referring, for example, to terrorism, which is expanding in many countries; the issue of migration crisis, particularly in the African continent, from where we get news, virtually every day, of youth, children, and women who abandon their homes out of desperation, and venture into the world to face subhuman conditions in search of a better life; the impact of climate change on human security; conflicts and other threats to peace coming to us from all quadrants of the world; the glaring situation of poverty that continues to be a reality challenging our global capacity to leave no one behind.

In order to mitigate these and other problems faced by all of us present in this august assembly, the United Nations have worked tirelessly under the leadership of our Secretary-General, to whom I would like to express our profound gratitude.

And in order to face these problems, the Madam President of the General Assembly could not be more right in proposing as the theme of her Presidency "Making the United Nations relevant to all people," as well as making multilateralism, which I define here as the combination of efforts and a path to achieve "global leadership and shared responsibilities" and to build the "peaceful, equitable, and sustainable societies" that we all desire.

Madam President,

We will celebrate the 70-year anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10th of this year.

However, hate, discrimination, and violence are still alive!

As the Director-General of Unesco stated, and I quote: "Hundreds of millions of women and men are destitute, deprived of basic livelihoods and opportunities. Forced population movements are violating rights on unprecedented scale. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promises to leave no one behind – human rights must be the bedrock for all progress moving forward."

December 10th, International Human Rights Day, is strategically important to the extent that Human Rights establish a universal standard of society to be achieved: globally inclusive, socially emancipating, able to allow free and full development for every human being.

The fact that universal standards and principles of human rights are integral to the legal order of many countries is a major advancement for humanity; however, this does mean that they are fully and effectively accepted. In fact, human rights achievements translate into a framework of rights that combine with cultural or historical conditions to weave a non-linear history that is contradictory at times but always open and incomplete.

Therefore, respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights constitutes an unquestionably noble goal and, at the same time, one of the greatest challenges of our time. On the one hand,

the struggle for its effectiveness is intensifying. However, in large parts of the world, violations are virtually institutionalized.

These are also observed in situations of war, which unfortunately afflict many parts of Africa, taking on unacceptable dimensions with common practices that tend to increase human trafficking, including that of children, victims of organized transnational crime, as well as acts of genocide and other war crimes.

Under these often unfavorable conditions, we raise the banner of hope and fight on to defend and promote human rights, driven, above all, by our faith in the capacity of humanity to creatively adapt reality to our will despite causalities and constraints.

Our country's choice to pursue a policy of peace, dialog, and understanding to prevent and resolve conflicts reflects and acknowledges these values. More than that, it emanates from the very nature of the Cabo Verdean people, from a culture of tolerance that has allowed our policies to be shaped by such values and principles over four decades of history as a sovereign nation. In our day-to-day lives, we have demonstrated that tolerance is possible, that the exchange of values is a reality, even in the face of adversity.

Madam President,  
Heads of Delegations,  
Mr. Secretary-General,

We are profoundly regretful to see that the death penalty still exists in many countries of the World! The existence of the death penalty in the XXI Century requires profound, careful, and responsible reflection from all of us! The need for a new universal conscience leads us to rethink our purposes and motivations for human coexistence, always based on respect for life and the eminent dignity of human beings.

The constitution and justice system of Cabo Verde do not provide for life sentences or the death penalty. The latter, in fact, has been inapplicable in our country since before the last quarter of the XIX Century. Our unique historical and social condition has instilled in us cultural principles and values that promote the right to life under any circumstances.

In this regard, we wish to reiterate our absolute support for Pope Francis's recent appeal to the conscience of government authorities to seek an international consensus for the abolition of the death penalty. In addition to calling for the unequivocal, firm, and example-setting repudiation of capital punishment, Pope Francis also spoke against the so-called extra-judicial executions or illegal killings that are being committed.

We firmly believe, in the name of clemency and prudence, that capital punishment is not an appropriate and fair instrument nor is it efficient in achieving justice, in light of its insurmountable conditionalities and weaknesses.

Life, as a superior value, cannot be left at the mercy of presumably fallible judges who, unaware of the laws of clemency, imprudently insist on donning «the soiled robe” of an executioner and succumbing to the dim light cast by a law that, as a relative value, is certainly not above the value of life and ethics that it incarnates.

In addition, we also believe in the rehabilitation of Man, through a permanent and optimistic anthropology, and that we have, in the modern world, institutional conditions and less grievous forms of punishment that are suitable and effective and avoid the shameful and radical solution of ending the life of a fellow human being.

It is along these lines that we would like to fully subscribe to the Holy Father Pope Francis's plea for a universal moratorium on executions.

Madam President,  
Heads of Delegations,  
Mr. Secretary-General,

At the height of our 43 years of independence, Cabo Verde, a small island state with major shortages of resources, is proud to be a democratic country built under the Rule of Law through the sacrifice and determination of Cabo Verdeans residing in country and abroad.

I believe that my country, even if modestly, can contribute to the search for solutions to major problems that currently afflict our troubled world.

In addition to the political stability that has characterized our country and the democratic regime that we have built and consolidated, the Nation of Cabo Verde – that predates the creation of the State – may be considered an example of peaceful coexistence among people from different countries, with different beliefs, who mixed into a unique and diverse culture that is open to the world and the exchange of values.

I am also proud, without any pretense of false modesty, of our country's journey from independence to the present. In fact, I can say that the human, economic, and financial indexes that our country has achieved have been favorably evaluated by major international institutions, particularly those in the financial arena.

However, with a service-based economy, a very small market, and an agricultural sector that struggles against desertification and scarce rainfall, we cannot ignore our significant vulnerabilities and we cannot rest because we have graduated to middle-income country.

Rather, we think that we cannot lose sight of the fact that our economy continues to be very dependent, that it cannot absorb a very significant portion of our workers, with all the social effects that this entails, and this "obligates" us to continue to rely on international solidarity.

Naturally we must also increase our reliance on domestic resources, develop through public-private partnerships, be more effective in fighting against poverty, social exclusion, and unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, and thus promote growth and development in our country!

Our constraints in energy, water, health, and sanitation, to name just a few areas, will need our continued attention, and we will need to build the indispensable infrastructure to create the conditions required for the sustainable growth of our economy. Similarly, as we look toward our future, we must also consider the increasingly disastrous impacts of climate change and other natural disaster risks on the world, particularly Small Island Developing States.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In 2008, Cabo Verde graduated to Middle-Income Country during a major international financial crisis, which contributed to our missing the window of opportunity created by the graduation. Since then, the structural vulnerabilities afflicting our country not only aggravated but also became more complex. We see this in our growing regional asymmetries, which are aggravated by the lack of territorial continuity of an island nation, the nefarious effects of drought and desertification and other climate changes, weak production capacity, youth unemployment, and social and gender inequalities, the excessive burden of external debt on the budget, the difficulties in internally connecting our country by air and by sea, which hampers the creation of a competitive and coherent market, which is essential to develop tourism. These facts convince us of the need for and pertinence of support measures that are distinct and adjusted to the reality of our country in the areas of development, trade, and foreign debt. Finally, we call for more consequent inclusion and eligibility of Island Developing Countries, in line with the work that is being pursued, and that I encourage, at the United Nations System, the OECD, and other institutions.

Toward this purpose, the Government of Cabo Verde will organize a Round Table in Paris, in December, to call on the mobilization of innovative partnerships that are consistent with our reality as a small island developing state. Cabo Verde will want to hear what our Development Partners think of the pertinence of our proposals, and to discuss forms of cooperation with them, in close coordination with our agreed national efforts, including the alignment of our National Development Plan with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Therefore we count on your support in this journey with Cabo Verde toward the sustainable development that we strive for.

Thank you very much!