

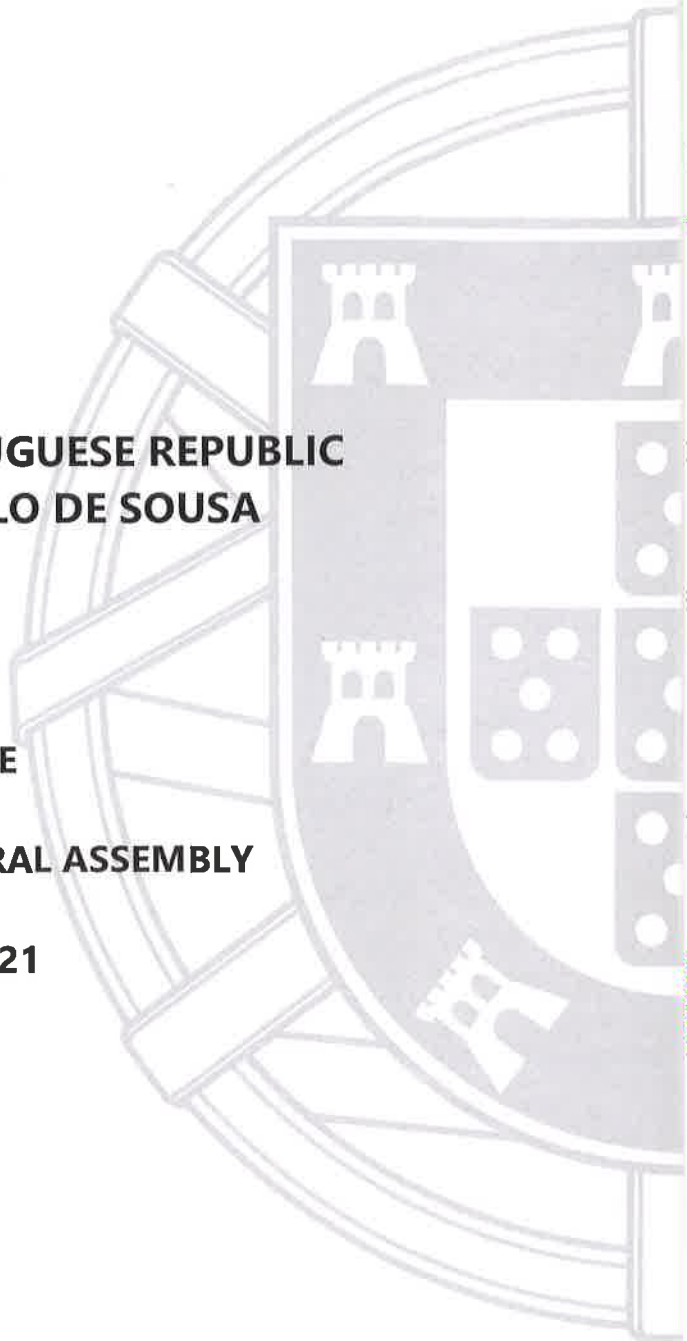


PORTUGAL

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ADDRESS BY
THE PRESIDENT OF THE PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC
PROF. DR. MARCELO REBELO DE SOUSA

GENERAL DEBATE
76th UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
21 SEPTEMBER 2021
NEW YORK



Mr President Abdulla Shahid,
Mr Secretary-General António Guterres,
Excellencies,

Mr President,

I congratulate you on your election. You have our full support for your priorities: to recover sustainably from the pandemic; to uphold human rights; to revitalize multilateral organisations, foremost the United Nations.

I thank the outgoing President Volkan Bozkır for a historic General Assembly.

Mr Secretary-General,

As I said here in June, I congratulate you for your exemplary first mandate. I thank the General Assembly for the confidence it placed in the right person at the right time. I fully support the call for a global cease-fire, the reform process of the United Nations, and the "Call to Action for Human Rights".

I equally support the priorities chosen – in a United Nations 2.0 and an agenda focused on persons – to respond to the pandemic, to seek international peace and security, to galvanise climate action, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in this Decade of Action, to ensure the centrality of human rights, to promote gender equality, and to deal with the challenges of digital transformation.

Excellencies,

The pandemic, the resulting economic and social crises and the recent developments in Afghanistan, confront us with evidence that we cannot and must not ignore.

First evidence – the world is multipolar. No country, no matter how powerful, can face, on his own or with only a few partners, climate change, pandemics, economic and social crises, terrorism, misinformation; and also promote the safe and orderly movement of persons, the protection of the most vulnerable and human rights.

Second evidence – the governance of a multipolar world requires commitment and agreement between nations, and that means multilateralism.

Third evidence – multilateralism, faced with challenges that go beyond borders and require joint responses, must be based on International Law, on the values of the Charter, and on the strengthening of International Organisations, starting with the United Nations and its specialised agencies.

Fourth evidence – whenever we hesitate on multilateralism, whenever we question International Law and the role of International Organizations, we fail. We have witnessed it in the response to the pandemic or to emerging crises, and in the promotion of peace and security. “Our Common Agenda”, and the innovative ideas put forward in the Secretary-General’s recent report, are our best roadmap.

Fifth evidence – we need to enlarge, deepen and accelerate reforms in the United Nations – in management, in peace and security, and the development system. And also to move forward in the reform of the Security Council – reflecting the realities of the 21st century, with at least African presence among the Permanent Members, as well as Brazil and India. But these reforms require additional financial means.

Affirming the role of the United Nations, but struggling with reforms and denying resources implies, in practice, weakening multilateralism and fostering crisis situations, with negative effects for everyone.

Excellencies,

Portugal has always been – and will always be – on the side of consensus that solve crises.

Portugal, and the European Union, stand with multilateralism; with the United Nations; with a rules-based international order; with human rights. Portugal is committed to the reform of the World Health Organization, to supporting an International Treaty on Pandemics, to guaranteeing that vaccines are a global public good. Portugal is also committed to the 2030 Agenda; to the relief of external debt of the most vulnerable countries; to the implementation of the Global Compact for Migration as a “Champion Country”.

In 2022, Portugal will host in Lisbon, together with Kenya, the Second UN Ocean Conference, an essential dimension of climate action. And Portugal supports the international recognition of the Right to a Healthy Environment.

Portugal participates in peacekeeping operations. Portugal supports the EU-Africa dialogue and international action for the stabilization of the

Sahel, maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and the cooperation with Mozambique in its fight against terrorism.

Portugal has never changed course. This was demonstrated during our Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in our participation in the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, now celebrating its 25th anniversary, and in the global projection of the Portuguese language, spoken by almost 300 million persons.

We demonstrated it in the bold initiative of President Jorge Sampaio – who passed away a few days ago – of the Global Platform for Syrian Students, now extended to Afghan refugees.

Excellencies,

We do not change our principles.

And we will hold this course should you place your trust in us for a term in the Security Council in 5 years from now.

We believe that the most pressing concerns of our time, like climate change, pandemic, economic and social crises, war and insecurity, migration and refugees, only confirm that isolationism, protectionism,

unilateralism, intolerance, populism and xenophobia, inevitably lead to dead ends.

The Secretary General's message is clear, insightful and forward looking. More than an appeal to Member States, it is an appeal to all the citizens of the world.

It is not just for climate that there is no Planet B, it is for everything.

Either we are all aware of that, throughout the world, or political leaders will be tempted to forget, to delay, to stall, to waste time.

Twenty years after 9/11; six years after the Paris Agreement; a year and a half after the beginning of the pandemic.

We need more than ever an effective multilateralism.

There really is no more time to waste.