

**Address by His Excellency the President of the Portuguese Republic
78th United Nations General Assembly
19 September 2023**

Your Excellency President Dennis Francis,
Mr. Secretary-General António Guterres,
Your Excellencies,

President Dennis Francis, believe me when I say that Portugal commits to your priorities: restoring confidence in multilateralism, accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals, strengthening human rights and restoring peace and security.

Allow me also a word of gratitude to the outgoing President Csaba Korosi, whom I congratulate on his mandate.

Secretary-General António Guterres, whom I applaud for your inexhaustible dedication to the values of the United Nations Charter, believe me when I reaffirm Portugal's permanent support to "Our Common Agenda", and the reforms it proposes for global governance, including financial governance, but also our permanent support to the priorities that can never be abandoned in the fight against climate change, the promotion of dialogue and peace, the centrality of human rights, migrants, refugees and gender equality.

And, I ask you also to believe in Portugal's commitment to the success of the Summit of the Future in 2024, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Forum, which Portugal will host in 2024, and the World Social Summit in 2025, hallmarks of your permanent lucidity and determination, which will continue to accompany you in your demanding mission for a more peaceful and cooperative world.

Your Excellencies,

We are going through an era of global historical urgency, which calls on all of us without exception.

First, an urgent need to restore the centrality of the principles of the United Nations Charter, of our collective bond with non-negotiable respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, for the defence of human rights, human, food and nuclear security. This is all at stake with the war in Ukraine, which is geographically European but has multiple global effects, as insecurity spills over into other regions, such as the Sahel, the Middle East and Asia, which are more vulnerable to third-party interference, terrorism and new cycles of economic contraction, poverty and political fragility. To address these threats, Portugal will stand firm in the dialogue between Europe, Africa and other continents, as our current and future strategic partners.

To distinguish the rightful struggle of the Ukrainian people from the rightful defence of the United Nations is to acquiesce to a world of illegitimate and illegal aggression, thereby forever compromising effective multilateralism, cooperation for peace and the preservation of millions of human lives. In a year when we celebrate the

In a year that marks the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 30th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, I reiterate Portugal's commitment to the United Nations Charter.

Second, there is an urgent need for more ambitious cooperation against climate change, the cause of more and more extreme and abrupt phenomena. It is essential that we reinforce the centrality of science in the diagnosis, monitoring and credibility of our political decisions.

It is essential that we promote the role of young people in our political systems, as champions of the fight against climate change and for better intergenerational justice and more sustainable economic options.

It is essential that we remain united in solidarity in the major climate cooperation forums, such as the Paris Agreement and the upcoming COP28 in the United Arab Emirates, accelerating global decarbonization targets and mobilizing solutions that transform asphyxiating foreign debts into investments in renewable energies or others with a positive impact on the blue economy and biodiversity, following the example set by the recent agreement between Portugal and Cabo Verde, which we want to extend to the other members of the Community of Portuguese-speaking countries, a communion of 300 million people around a language of global communication that is present in all continents. As the Secretary-General has already warned, we cannot continue to have half the world's population living in countries that pay more in interest on their debt than they invest in education and health.

It is essential that we continue to stand firm in defence of the Oceans Agenda for a global sustainable future. The answers to global warming, pollution and desertification also lie there. Therefore, I welcome the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, which Portugal will sign tomorrow, as well as the co-hosting of the next Ocean Conference by France and Costa Rica in 2025.

At a time when the calamitous effects of climate change are contributing factors to increasingly forced and recurrent migrations, Portugal stands firm by the Global Compact on Migration, and pays tribute to the leadership work of the IOM Director-General António Vitorino, which has been decisive in responding to a challenge that is becoming increasingly central to the United Nations agenda.

At a time when the perverse effects of climate change on rising sea levels are already being felt in coastal erosion, the insecurity of island countries and the destruction of ecosystems, Portugal, like the European Union, stands firmly by the work carried out by the International Law Commission co-chaired by Patrícia Galvão Teles.

Third, there is an urgent need to adapt international organisations and political and financial cooperation instruments to meet the changes taking place in the international

order. Starting with the reform of the United Nations Security Council, which must be more representative, agile and functional in order to preserve its recognition among member states, its legitimacy in safeguarding the principles of the Charter, and its effectiveness in dealing with multiple security crises, potentially more recurrent.

Portugal, a candidate for non-permanent membership of the Security Council in the 2027-2028 biennium, supports the elevation of Brazil and India to permanent members, as well as the Common African Position and the representation of small island countries in that forum. Portugal will continue to strive for a more transparent, coherent and accountable Security Council, which is why we have co-sponsored all initiatives that seek to limit or scrutinize the use of the right to veto.

In an international order where some of its members are seeking to shift the balance of power, a sign of discontent with some of the existing rules, it is also important to re-evaluate the representation, scope and effectiveness of some financial organisations. As Secretary-General António Guterres said, "we need a new international financial architecture, a new Bretton Woods".

It is urgent to move forward along paths of respect for the values of the United Nations Charter, peace, sustainable development, climate action, correcting inequalities, reforming the United Nations and the world's financial institutions.

It's urgent, it's really very urgent.

Every day lost is another day of inequality and conflict.

Every day gained is another day of justice, solidarity and peace.

Thank you very much.