



## Speech by His Excellency the Prime Minister of Portugal at the 79<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly

*New York, 26 September 2024*

*Mr President [of the General Assembly],  
Mr Secretary General,  
Dear Heads of State and Government,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,*

I congratulate the President of the 79th (Seventy-ninth) General Assembly, Mr Philemon Yang, on his election and wish him every success.

I express special appreciation for the tireless work of Secretary-General António Guterres. The reforms he has promoted since 2017 have contributed to the effective improvement of the functioning of the United Nations. He knows that he has Portugal's full support.

As this is the first time I am addressing this magna assembly, I can only recognise the weight of responsibility that falls on all of us, the representatives of the peoples of the United Nations.

I am doing so at a particularly demanding time, marked by the confluence of multiple global challenges and crises and growing geopolitical tensions.

But I also do it with **hope and confidence**.

Hope because 50 years of **freedom** are being celebrated in my country.

**The Portuguese people, in freedom, clamoured for democracy, peace and development.** And so the arc of history was bent.



At a time when autocracies in many parts of the world are jeopardising democracy, we have confidence in the strength of freedom.

At a time when we are facing threats to peace, we have confidence in the strength of multilateralism and collective responsibility.

At a time when development challenges are becoming more acute, we have faith in economic growth as the engine of fair and sustainable progress.

*Mr President,*

*Excellencies,*

Portugal is an **uncompromising advocate of multilateralism** as a method of cooperation and organisation of the international system.

That's why we support the **Pact for the Future**, adopted within the framework of the Summit of the Future, which illustrates the vision and reforming spirit of Secretary-General António Guterres.

This Pact reflects a renewed source of **hope** in multilateralism and in the three central pillars of United Nations action: **sustainable development, human rights and global peace and security**.

It is with this **confidence** in multilateralism that Portugal, with the continuity and coherence that characterises our foreign policy, is a **candidate for a seat as a non-permanent member of the Security Council** for the 2027-2028 biennium.

We are guided by the will to work to *prevent* conflicts, promote a spirit of *partnership* and *protect* people in the face of traditional threats such as terrorism and emerging threats such as biosecurity.



We are determined to contribute to a more just, peaceful and inclusive international order, founded on international law and based on the United Nations Charter.

*Mr President*

*Excellencies*

The Secretary-General said in "Our Common Agenda" that **multilateralism** faces a fundamental dilemma: "**to breakthrough or to breakdown**".

We do not hesitate. We want to move forward with **the reform of the global governance system** to guarantee greater representativeness, transparency, justice and co-operation.

This is the path that the Pact for the Future shows us: **redesigning the international financial architecture**, promoting greater alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals.

With Burundi, we led the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD4) to ensure that no country has to choose between fighting poverty or saving the planet.

On another front, we are in favour of reforming the United Nations Security Council to make it more representative, agile and functional. Its composition is outdated and the absence of representatives from some regions hampers its functioning.

Portugal supports the African Common Position and the aspirations of Brazil and India to become permanent members. Small and medium-sized countries, including small island states, should also have their representation strengthened.

As far as working methods are concerned, we support the limitation and greater scrutiny of the use of the veto. The right of



veto, before being a power, represents a responsibility. And that's how it should be exercised.

*Mr President*

*Excellence*

The world is now more prosperous overall, but **socio-economic divides** are widening. Eradicating poverty and hunger are the first two Sustainable Development Goals.

But **chronic hunger** is on the rise, affecting one in ten people globally. **Acute food insecurity** has almost tripled since 2016.

In this context, we welcome the **Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty**, proposed by the **Brazilian Presidency of the G20**.

The hope we are talking about can only be realised if we are able to respond to the needs of millions of people affected by conflict, without regular access to basic necessities such as drinking water, healthcare or education.

Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Myanmar, the Sahel and now Lebanon are examples of the suffering of millions of people forced to leave their homes and families.

I'm also talking about climate refugees. Rising temperatures, forest fires (which tragically hit my country recently), droughts and other extreme weather events have forced millions to move.

At the same time, disrespect for the rights of women and girls or persecution on religious or sexual grounds has become more and more widespread in various parts of the world.

The context of human rights protection is severely weakened and threatened.



It is our collective responsibility to guarantee the respect, protection and realisation of **human rights**, as well as the central role of the United Nations in this matter.

New technologies, such as artificial intelligence, are an opportunity, but they also create risks. The Pact for the Future points the way to a virtuous balance in this area.

We must act to combat relentlessly all forms of discrimination and hatred that undermine the cohesion of our societies.

In this context, we will continue to defend the rights of young people. The High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth, which, **at Portugal's request**, will be held here in a year's time to mark the 30th anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth, will be an opportunity to move forward on this front. This is a priority for Portugal at home and abroad.

*Mr President*

*Excellence*

**Peace is the primary objective of the United Nations.** And here too we must give a sign of hope.

The Russian Federation's war of aggression against **Ukraine** is a flagrant violation of international law, which we strongly condemn.

The negative effects of this war - the food, energy and inflation crises - are echoing around the world, with the greatest impact on the most fragile regions.

We cannot accept the precedent of unilaterally changing borders by force, in violation of the UN Charter.

We are also deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation and the dangerous escalation in the Middle East region. In view of the



events in Lebanon, we call on the parties to exercise maximum restraint to avoid escalation.

We firmly condemn the horrific terrorist attacks perpetrated by Hamas on 7 October 2023 and demand the release of all hostages.

We cannot

We will not stand by the humanitarian disaster and the growing number of civilian victims in Gaza.

It is imperative to unconditionally cease hostilities, guarantee the entry of humanitarian aid and respect for international humanitarian law. It is also imperative to resume negotiations with a view to implementing the two-state solution - the only one that can bring peace and stability to the region.

Portugal is against the expansion of settlements, the confiscation of land in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and the actions of settlers that constitute violations of international law and obstacles to peace.

It is our common interest and shared responsibility to ensure strict respect for international law and humanitarian law, as well as the proper functioning of the international justice system.

Despite the progress made in some regions, the international community has not been able to resolve conflicts that have lasted decades or prevent new outbreaks of tension.

We need to step up our commitment to conflict prevention and mediation, particularly in Africa.

I would highlight Portugal's consistent presence in United Nations peacekeeping operations and European Union missions, with national forces deployed in Mozambique, Somalia, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Gulf of Guinea.

I would also emphasise the contribution of ECOWAS and the African Union to the efforts to promote stability in the region. Only



African solutions will provide sustainable answers to the challenges facing the continent.

Portugal supported the resolution that allowed for the establishment of regular UN contributions to the financing of African Union peace operations mandated by the Security Council. We also support the Secretary General's proposals to establish regular contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund.

*Mr President,  
Excellencies,*

Portugal is a **maritime country**: ninety-seven per cent of our territory is ocean. We understand the **vital role of the ocean** in the **global economy** and in combating **climate change**.

We strongly support the **sustainable management and governance of the oceans** and the development of a "new sustainable blue economy" in line with the 2030 Agenda.

We consider capacity building in ocean-related matters a priority and have designed a scholarship programme aimed at developing countries, with a special focus on Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The International Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) was a victory for multilateralism. We will remain committed to its entry into force.

Portugal is calling for a joint effort to finalise an ambitious treaty to eliminate plastic pollution by the end of this year.

**Climate change** is the existential threat of our time.



Given the central importance of the climate-ocean-biodiversity nexus, Portugal supported Vanuatu's initiative to request an opinion on the obligations of states with regard to climate change. We welcome the important opinion of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea of May 2024, which, together with the future opinion of the International Court of Justice, will strengthen the **legal framework on climate change**.

The International Law Commission's Study Group on sea level rise, co-chaired by a Portuguese woman, has been doing important work in this area.

Portugal remains committed to investing in renewable energies and phasing out fossil fuels. We want to incorporate 47 per cent renewables into final energy consumption **by 2030**.

We have also favoured the introduction of innovative **financial mechanisms**, including **SIDS**. An example of this is the agreements signed by Portugal with **Cape Verde** and **São Tomé and Príncipe** to transform debt into climate investment, thus supporting the **energy transition**.

*Mr President,*  
*Excellencies,*

The success of the 2030 Agenda is mainly in favour of the most vulnerable groups. **We cannot leave anyone behind**.

The **digital transition** and emerging technologies represent a renewed opportunity to facilitate a more prosperous, fair, inclusive and sustainable future. Connectivity is a cornerstone.

The path seems clear: technological development needs to be conceived through a human-centred lens and based on international law.





*Mr President,*

*Your Excellencies,*

I'm very proud to speak to you in Portuguese.

As well as being the fourth most spoken language in the world as a mother tongue, today uniting more than 260 million people on all continents, Portuguese is an official and working language in 33 International Organisations, including the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP).

The CPLP's ambition to have the Portuguese language recognised as an official language of the United Nations is therefore legitimate.

*Mr President,*

*Your Excellencies,*

The legitimacy of the United Nations, its convening power and its global normative authority, combined with its multidisciplinary expertise, are some of its unique assets, which must be harnessed in favour of our common causes and a shared vision of the future.

The road ahead is arduous and uncertain, but the goal has been set. We will walk it with **hope and confidence**. The United Nations and the international community can count on Portugal in this endeavour.

Thank you very much.