

PORTUGAL

**Statement by His Excellency the President of the Portuguese Republic,
Mr. Aníbal Cavaco Silva,
at the 63rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

“Shared Responsibility, Common Destiny”

New York, 24 September 2008

Mr. President,

I wish you all the success for your tenure in office. We are convinced that you will provide the best continuity to the excellent work carried out by your predecessor.

Guaranteeing peace and international security as well as the sustainable development of our peoples is our shared responsibility. How we will achieve this goals will determine our common destiny. The relevance of these purposes and the centrality of the United Nations in their pursuit have never been so obvious. Though, the United Nations will be what we, as sovereign and equal Member States, want them to be.

We live in a time of historic acceleration. A time of great opportunities but also of challenges on a global scale.

Global challenges imply a **collective responsibility**. The United Nations are the forum that best embodies that collective responsibility. That is also why I strongly support the statement of the President of the French Republic, in his capacity as President of the Council of the **European Union**.

In a globalised and interdependent world, only strong multilateral institutions can promote the fundamental values of peace, democracy, human rights and sustainable development. Portugal is committed to supporting **effective multilateralism**, based on cohesive and efficient United Nations.

In order not to reduce our words to pure rhetoric, we must be coherent and put into practice the values, principles and policies we defend. Our actions must be based on very clear assumptions.

First, we must make every effort to ensure the United Nations have the necessary means to fulfil their mission; and we must contribute to the clarity of the mandates we entrust them.

Is it reasonable to continue having a Security Council without reforming its working methods, where countries like Brazil and India have no permanent seat and where Africa is not represented with that status? Surely not, starting with these cases, but without prejudice of possibly broader solutions.

Third, we must guarantee the fulfilment of the declarations on human rights approved by all of us. This organization must bear in mind that the ultimate beneficiaries of its actions are not the States as such but the citizens and peoples that compose them.

Mr. President,

Portugal has been committed to this common effort. Firstly, by participating in **peacekeeping operations**. I would like to commend the many thousands of Portuguese who have participated in over 20 missions led by the United Nations and those who currently are incorporated in missions in Timor-Leste, Lebanon, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Chad and the Central African Republic.

In the year we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, I would like to pay tribute to all “blue berets”, in particular to the memory of all those, Portuguese included, who made the ultimate sacrifice for the ideals of the United Nations Charter.

Africa must continue to deserve urgent attention. It was this belief that led us, together with our African partners, to hold the Cairo and Lisbon Summits between the European Union and Africa, points of departure for deepening the dialogue between the two continents.

The shared principles, the commitments undertaken and the EU-Africa Joint Strategy illustrate a renewed partnership based on cooperation in areas such as peace and security, development, good governance and human rights, trade and regional integration.

Peace, sustainable development, access to education and health and the integration of the African economies in the international markets are essential objectives to build a more just, more peaceful and more balanced international order. Accordingly, we must support the efforts of the African nations to achieve these objectives.

In this context, I would like to congratulate the Angolan people for the civic way in which their recent electoral process was carried out. The legislative elections had a profound bearing on the consolidation of democracy in Angola, with important regional political repercussions.

I also greet the political agreement in Zimbabwe, which we hope will mark a new phase of national reconciliation and political and economic development.

I wish also to congratulate Guinea-Bissau on the anniversary of its independence. As co-chairman of the International Contact Group for Guinea-Bissau, Portugal is committed to contributing to the stabilization of a country that can benefit greatly from the work of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Guinea-Bissau is one of the Member States of the **Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP)**, from whom it has received strong political support. CPLP has undertaken increasing responsibilities as an operational partner of the regional organizations to which its Member States belong, as is the case of the European Union and of the African Union, or global organizations such as the United Nations.

The recent Lisbon Summit, in which Portugal took over the presidency of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, has confirmed its members' determination to promote peace, democracy, human rights and development. It has also led to the definition of a common strategy of international assertiveness based on our shared asset: the Portuguese language – the fifth most spoken language in the world, connecting States and peoples in the five continents. An assertiveness that should lead the Portuguese to be increasingly used as an official or working language at international organizations.

Recently, Portugal also took over the presidency of the **Community of Democracies**. Very soon, we will be taking over the presidency of the **Ibero-American Summit** – a genuine reference of political cooperation based on the communion of culture and values. We are greatly honoured by these mandates which we aim to exercise with determination and confidence.

Portugal believes that the natural vocation of the **Alliance of Civilizations** to bring together peoples, cultures and religions is instrumental for a world where dialogue must prevail over conflict and where tolerance, respect for cultural diversity and for individual identity and mutual understanding overcome accumulated tensions. Therefore, we give our firm support to the Action Plan of the High Representative of the United Nations Secretary General.

Mr. President,

Seven years have passed since this city suffered one of the most infamous acts the world has witnessed in our time. Although much has been done since then, **terrorism** continues to be a threat. The implementation of the Global Strategy is fundamental for the success in combating this “common enemy”.

In this regard, respect for human rights and for the fundamental freedom is crucial and their promotion contributes to preventing terrorism.

Other slower but equally destructive “common enemies” are **hunger and extreme poverty**. In this area, too, much has been said and some measures have been taken. However much more is required.

We reiterate our firm support for the Millennium **Development** Goals. Portugal, which is contributing to the limit of its possibilities, is directing most of its development aid to Africa, where the levels of poverty are more striking.

We are pleased to register the creation of a high level working group on the **Global Food Crisis**. The fight against hunger and poverty requires a strengthened global partnership in which the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions have a core role.

Ensuring sustainable development requires that together we confront the challenges posed by **climate change**. Not to act now will imply an irreversible legacy for coming generations, as shown by the last progress report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – most justly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In this joint action it is vital to support those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries. Oceans, seas, islands and coastal areas, which are vital for human life and economic prosperity, deserve our greatest attention.

Therefore it is important to combine all efforts to ensure that by December next year in Copenhagen negotiations are completed on a global and transparent agreement on the future post-2012 climate regime.

Mr. President,

Economic development is not an end in itself. It is a mean towards the progress of mankind and the affirmation of **human rights**.

Portugal has been the driving force behind the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which this Assembly will be called upon for its adoption. It is our opinion that the Protocol constitutes a landmark in the promotion of Human Rights and democracy, enabling us to suitably celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Let us always bear in mind that the dignity of human beings is not negotiable.

I would like to refer to the humanitarian situation of refugees. Portugal acknowledges the remarkable work carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In this

case a continued collective effort is required to which my country has responded by tripling its refugee quota.

Mr. President,

We are the United Nations. Its fate is in our hands. The success of this organisation is closely linked to its capacity for regeneration, strengthened democraticity, representativeness and effectiveness.

I therefore wish to hail the consensus in this General Assembly on the reform process of the Security Council, enabling the intergovernmental negotiations to begin shortly. Portugal has the honour of being linked in a direct way to this result.

In 2000, Portugal submitted its candidacy to a **non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2011-12 biennium.**

Our candidacy must be read in the light of the principles and values of the United Nations that we have long defended and that are also enshrined in the Portuguese Constitution.

We stand for “service to peace and stability, sustainable development and human rights” and because we believe in the central role of this Organization in pursuing these goals.

We stand for an equal representation of States, namely those that constitute the majority in this House, because we believe that this is the best way to guarantee justice and inclusiveness that is essential for decisions to be accepted by all.