Letter dated 24 February 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

With reference to the joint letter of the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council dated 5 February 2021, I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter from the Prime Minister of the Portuguese Republic presenting the candidature of António Guterres for a second term as Secretary-General of the United Nations (see annex).

I kindly request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Francisco Duarte Lopes
Permanent Representative
Annex to the letter dated 24 February 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

The Government of Portugal thanks you for the letter of 5 February concerning the selection and appointment of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Portugal fully concurs that the position of Secretary-General is of major importance, requiring the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, as well as a firm commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. We also agree that it is indispensable for candidates to have previously demonstrated leadership and managerial abilities as well as an extensive experience in international relations and strong diplomatic, communication and multilingual skills.

It is the firm conviction of the Government of Portugal that Mr. António Guterres fully meets all these criteria, as demonstrated throughout the discharge of his current mandate as Secretary-General.

In a particularly challenging period for the Organization and for the world, Secretary-General António Guterres has shown an unwavering commitment to the maintenance of peace and security, the promotion of human rights and the advancement of sustainable development, while sparing no efforts in calling for an urgent and decisive action to address the climate crisis. He has launched a process of reform aimed at making the Organization nimbler and more efficient in delivering on its goals. Gender equality has been a cornerstone throughout his mandate, enabling decisive system-wide progress towards gender parity in the Organization’s workforce and the prompt attainment of this objective among senior managers and resident coordinators. Many innovative areas have been dealt with, notably digital cooperation and transition.

All of the above has been done in strict adherence to the provisions of the Charter, in close collaboration with Member States and, when appropriate, through strengthened partnerships with relevant international or regional organizations and engagement with civil society and the private sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought us all to the test, and the United Nations was no exception. Secretary-General António Guterres has shown leadership in confronting the current crisis in its many dimensions. His principled defence of multilateralism has been instrumental in positioning the Organization to better tackle the recovery process while promoting societies and economies that are more resilient, cohesive and sustainable.

Against this background, Portugal was particularly pleased to learn that Mr. Guterres would be available to serve a second term, as conveyed in his letters of 11 January.

Consequently, the Government of Portugal is honoured to formally present the candidature of Mr. António Guterres for the position of Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the mandate 2022–2026.

This nomination is submitted with the strong belief that António Guterres’ experience and qualifications render him uniquely suited to continue performing the responsibilities inherent to the position of Secretary-General of the United Nations at a time when the Organization and the world are, and unfortunately will remain, confronted with serious challenges.
In presenting this candidature, the Government of Portugal reiterates its strong support to the principles of transparency and inclusivity and welcomes the submission of vision statements by the candidates and the opportunities that will be offered for dialogues with members of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Finally, as we have recently celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, Portugal wishes to seize this opportunity to reiterate its firm commitment to the values, principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

(Signed) Antonio Costa
Prime Minister
Enclosure

António Guterres, the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations, took office on 1 January 2017.

Having witnessed the suffering of the most vulnerable people on earth, from refugee camps to war zones, the Secretary-General has centred his efforts on ensuring human dignity for all. In a period of unprecedented global challenges, he has drawn on his commitment to the Charter of the United Nations to mobilize people and launch action to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, address the climate emergency, advance gender equality and achieve ambitious twenty-first century reforms to enhance the Organization’s vital efforts to secure peace, sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian aid.

Prior to his appointment as Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres served as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from June 2005 to December 2015, heading one of the world’s foremost humanitarian organizations during some of the most serious displacement crises in decades and in a period in which the number of people displaced by conflict and persecution rose from 38 million in 2005 to over 60 million in 2015.

Before joining the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mr. Guterres spent more than 20 years in government and public service. He served as prime minister of Portugal from 1995 to 2002, during which time he was heavily involved in the international effort to resolve the crisis in East Timor.

As president of the European Council in early 2000, he led the adoption of the Lisbon Agenda for growth and jobs and co-chaired the first European Union-Africa summit. He was a member of the Portuguese Council of State from 1991 to 2002.

Mr. Guterres was elected to the Portuguese Parliament in 1976 where he served as a member for 17 years. During that time, he chaired the Parliamentary Committee for Economy, Finance and Planning, and later the Parliamentary Committee for Territorial Administration, Municipalities and Environment. He was also leader of his party’s parliamentary group.

From 1981 to 1983, Mr. Guterres was a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, where he chaired the Committee on Demography, Migration and Refugees.

For many years Mr. Guterres was active in Socialist International, a worldwide organization of social democratic political parties. He was the group’s vice-president from 1992 to 1999, co-chairing the African Committee and later the Development Committee. He served as president from 1999 until mid-2005. In addition, he founded the Portuguese Refugee Council as well as the Portuguese Consumers Association, DECO, and served as president of the Centro de Acção Social Universitário, an association carrying out social development projects in poor neighbourhoods of Lisbon, in the early 1970s.

Mr. Guterres is a member of the Club of Madrid, a leadership alliance of democratic former presidents and prime ministers from around the world.

Mr. Guterres was born in Lisbon in 1949 and graduated from the Instituto Superior Técnico with a degree in engineering. He is fluent in Portuguese, English, French and Spanish. He is married to Catarina de Almeida Vaz Pinto, Deputy Mayor for Culture of Lisbon, and has two children, a stepson and three grandchildren.