



**PERMANENT MISSION OF PORTUGAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**Statement of His Excellency the President of Portugal  
Jorge Sampaio**

**High-level Plenary Meeting of the  
General Assembly of the United Nations  
New York**

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**Please check against delivery**

Mister President of the General Assembly,

Mister Secretary General,

Heads of State and of Government,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to address this Assembly for the last time in my term of office as President of the Portuguese Republic in the year that we are celebrating the 60<sup>h</sup> anniversary of the United Nations. On this historic date, I feel that the generation to which I belong is charged with a responsibility that cannot be put off: the responsibility of responding to the global challenges that increasingly demand integrated, collective answers and of fulfilling the just aspirations of millions of individuals for whom day-to-day life is no more than a permanent, inglorious struggle for survival. I have always believed and said that it is the duty of the United Nations to articulate these responses and to point the way to meeting these expectations.

Proof of the visionary nature of its creation lies in the fact that during these six decades the United Nations has always occupied a central position on the international stage, never failing to be a reference for the hopes of mankind.

Peace, development and protection of human rights on a global scale were the foundations of the ambition of its founders. The initial hopes and

idealism were soon confronted with the harsh realities of power and conflicting interests. Not everything was a success, we must admit. But this idealism and this hope, because they corresponded to the most basic of human aspirations — dignity, freedom and economic development — continued to assert themselves at all times and to renew themselves even in adversity.

In no other period in the history of mankind has there been so much progress in the matter of life expectancy, health, education and quality of life as during these six decades. Unfortunately, there are still many million human beings that still live and die in the most dramatic poverty.

This Summit is an opportunity for the international community to renew its pledge to the ideals that presided over the foundation of the United Nations. The development goals of the Millennium allow these ideas to be translated into concrete achievements that will meet the needs of the poorer and more vulnerable in particular. Achieving them is not only a moral obligation; it is also a political imperative in ensuring a more secure future for all mankind. Portugal reiterates its support to these great objectives and its commitment to an effective multilateral system, essential to achieving them.

**Mister President,**

The Millennium Summit was a turning point, structuring and systematizing a global partnership of Cooperation for Development with clearly defined targets. Since then, considerable awareness has been created among governments and public opinion alike of the absolute priority of reducing poverty. Indeed, how can we be at peace with our conscience

while, in this era of unprecedented abundance, millions of human beings die because they are too poor to live?

Achieving the goals that were set up at the time lies within our grasp. If politics is the art of the possible, we, as political leaders, are charged with making reality possible.

As a member of the European Union, Portugal is committed to ensuring that European aid rises to 0.56% in 2010 and to 0.7% in 2015. At strictly national level, we intend to increase our volume of public aid to development to 0.51 % of the GDP by 2010.

Portugal has directed a large part of its effort to countries in which the scourge of poverty is felt most dramatically. We attach particular importance to the Least Developed Countries, those in Africa in particular, to which we devote 0.2% of our GDP, fully meeting the stated objectives in this case. The relations that Portugal has maintained with this continent over a period of centuries as well as the situation of extreme poverty and the manifest delay in meeting the established goals fully warrant this.

We accompany the movement towards debt pardoning, and we also believe in the creative identification of alternative sources of financing aid to development.

We devote particular attention to the pandemics, which affect these countries so brutally, and have recently increased to 5 million dollars our contribution to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis. In Africa in particular, these diseases, absolutely avoidable in so many cases, constitute the most terrible threat to human safety. What will future generations think if, with the resources and information available to us, we show we are incapable of dealing with them?

In the matter of cooperation for development, there is a shared responsibility between the aid donors and those receiving it, for aid will never be sufficient if not properly applied. We therefore lend decisive importance not only to good governance, particularly to the primacy of law and to the consolidation of democracy, but also to the restoration of the State's capabilities in performing its basic functions.

Mister President,

Without security there can be no sustainable development. Only a coherent, integrated strategy can allow effective action in preventing conflicts and, should this prove impossible, in providing the necessary support to reconstruction and to the restoration of the capabilities of State and institutions during the post-conflict period. This is the twofold task of the Peace-building Commission, a proposal initially presented by Portugal in 2003, the establishment of which will surely constitute one of the landmarks of this Summit.

We believe that the United Nations has an important part to play in the fight against international terrorism, ensuring effective, multilateral response to this dramatic new threat. The negotiation and conclusion of a global convention on the matter should continue to be a priority.

Relaunching the discussions on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction within the framework of this Organization also constitute an urgent necessity.

During the first six decades of its existence the United Nations has made a huge contribution to the birth of dozens of new independent States, through the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination. This process has now largely been concluded and the time is now ripe to put

individuals at the center of our concerns. Therefore, my closing words are about Human Rights. Our profound belief is that respect for Human Rights is now a universal aspiration. Portugal has long devoted special attention to this matter within the framework of the United Nations and it considers that the Human Rights Council, the creation of which will be decided during this Summit, should reflect with courage and ambition a growing demand regarding this issue by the International Community.

Mister President,

The document that we shall approve during this session is a step in the right direction: it demonstrates the ability of the International Community to unite around the great principles upon which the United Nations was founded; it renews and reiterates the commitment to the development goals of the Millennium; it makes a start to the process of reform of the Organization, so as to render it better able to respond to the challenges of our century. This Assembly is now charged with the great responsibility of lending continuity to and terminating the process now begun.

Portugal, for its part, reiterates its firm commitment to multilateralism, to the United Nations and to an international order in which the collective interest is not systematically sacrificed to expediency and to self-centered interests. Now, as at the time of its foundation, the United Nations must constitute the essential anchor of a system of international relations based on law and on justice. Strengthening the authority, the legitimacy and the relevance of the United Nations is an essential task if the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to be one of peace, of progress and of respect for the dignity of all human beings.