

Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mr. President, I congratulate you for your election to this central organ of the United Nations. Your success reflects your distinguished career, as well as the importance and dynamism of Qatar's diplomacy.

I would also like to praise the excellent work of the Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, warmly commending him for his new mandate. He can rest assured of Portugal's full and continued support.

Recognizing the presence in our midst of the representatives of the Republic of South Sudan, I want to express our best wishes to the authorities of this new state in building a peaceful and prosperous future.

Allow me also to renew our warmest congratulations to the delegation of the Libyan National Transitional Council. The Libyan People have displayed exemplary courage and tenacity in defending their freedom and the right to democratically chart their own destiny without fear. The new Libya can continue to count on Portugal.

Ten years have passed since the terrorist attacks of 09/11. I want to pay tribute, here in New York, to the American people and authorities, praising their courage and determination in facing and overcoming this tragedy. Upholding our spirit of solidarity, we remain fully engaged in fighting the scourge of terrorism and in reaching, as soon as possible, an agreement on the UN Global Convention on Counter-Terrorism.

Mr. President,

Camões, the Portuguese Poet of the 16th Century maritime discoveries, said that "the world is made of change, assuming always new qualities". Identifying the World of Change and its new qualities is a permanent challenge that we have to face and to which we have to respond.

We live in an historic time of change with multiple and intertwined challenges, "qualities" and opportunities.

In our always changing world we now face a massive challenge that requires an urgent collective answer: the re-launching of growth and employment. The economic and financial crisis, which started in the last decade, underscores that interdependence is a reality at the global level. Overcoming this crisis in a sustainable and structured way is a challenge that we must meet collectively.

To that end, we must correct macroeconomic inequalities, strengthen monetary security and rebalance world trade. Economic growth is a multiplier for employment, be it at the national or regional level, and depends today, in large part, on economic coordination at the global scale.

Governments, international organizations, the private sector as well as social partners ought to cooperate in a broad-ranging effort aimed at restoring the confidence of our citizens and firms. Prosperity is more than ever an objective that, if jointly shared, can be reached by us all.

In the context of the preparations of the Secretary-General's Report on Global Economic Governance, which will be submitted to this General Assembly, Portugal advocated for greater coordination and complementarity between the United Nations, the G20 and relevant regional groupings. We did so because we consider that it is indispensable to promote the involvement of emerging economies, the private sector and civil society, enhancing their respective role in global economic governance.

The European Union is preparing the foundations of its Economic Government, which is part of the European integration process. The economic pillar of the Economic and Monetary Union is also advancing well. This is good news not only for Europe, but also for the rest of the world. Portugal is engaged in this endeavour, fulfilling the commitments undertaken in its economic adjustment programme.

The Portuguese government and peoples are exerting unprecedented efforts to fulfill the commitments undertaken with the International Monetary Fund and the European Union. As widely recognized, we are moving quickly and resolutely in the consolidation of our public accounts and in the implementation of structural reforms for the modernization of the economy and for the promotion of economic growth and employment. We view the crisis as an opportunity to adapt our economic model and to strengthen the Portuguese economy.

Mr. President,

Last year we requested the trust of this General Assembly for our election to the Security Council. This year I want to express our gratitude for the confidence placed in my country and to restate Portugal's firm commitment and attachment to the values and objectives of the United Nations, as well as to the principles that drove our candidature.

In the context of United Nations reform, it is imperative that the main organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security be able to renovate itself. We want a more efficient and representative Security Council. Its composition should be adapted in order to adequately reflect the changes that emerged since its creation. In such a context, it is evident to us that we need to give Brazil and India a permanent seat and Africa should also be part of this enlargement.

Mr. President,

In this World of Change, the UN's indispensable role is reflected in the tireless and courageous work of thousands of its staff members and collaborators. Civilians and men and women in uniform, from the military and the police, play a fundamental role in peace operations to protect civilians, avoid an escalation of conflicts and create the necessary space and time for political negotiations to bear fruit.

The Portuguese are deeply proud of participating in this common effort. Our presence in the field represents one of our main contributions for the functioning of an effective

multilateralism. The Portuguese blue-helmets are present in Timor-Leste and in Lebanon, accounting for one of the largest European contingents in UN peacekeeping operations; they are highly professional military and police officers who make their country and the UN proud.

Mr. President,

The year 2011 started not with winter but with spring. The world, as the poet would say, has found a new quality, an opportunity for change created by the courage of the Arab people who came together to make their voice heard, defending loud and clear, sometimes at the cost of their own lives, the universal values and aspirations which embody our Community of Nations. Democracy and human rights are not relative values which depend on geography, ethnicity, faith or economic development.

Libya is opening a new chapter in its history, a new era of change and reconstruction. The Conference held here earlier this week confirmed the commitment of the international community, led by the United Nations, to support the new Authorities in laying the groundwork for a democratic, stable, united and prosperous Libya.

This was the spirit, and I welcome it, that inspired Resolution 2009, unanimously approved by the Security Council, establishing the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. We are determined, both in the Council and in the Sanctions Committee, which we chair, to continue contributing to the successful transition in Libya.

We would also like to see “success” characterize the Middle East Peace Process. Sixty years have passed and there is no time left for advances and retreats, for the status quo, nor for unilateral actions that are prejudicial to negotiations.

The recipes, principles, concrete formulae and roadmaps are all well known. We do not have to reinvent the wheel. Peace may be difficult, but it is within Palestine’s reach, a Palestine which already embodies all the traits of a state, to which the EU has greatly contributed. Peace, in this time of change, is also within Israel’s reach in the framework of a stable relationship and, above all else, security.

The recognition of a new State naturally falls upon the responsibility of each member state of this organization. Portugal has defended that the European Union, through its High Representative, in the context of the Quartet and in coordination with other members of the EU in the Security Council, has a constructive and decisive role in this process which is at a crossroads. Europe has the opportunity to speak with one voice, to build bridges and to facilitate compromises.

It should be clear that, as the creation of a Palestinian state is a promise that must be honoured, so to the security of Israel must be firmly guaranteed by the international community.

The President of the Palestinian Authority decided to present to the Security Council a request for admission of the state of Palestine. This step must be the result and logical outcome of negotiations. Therefore, we understand this request to be an expression of interest that will be fulfilled with the signing of a Peace Agreement, thus ending one of the longest conflicts of our era.

Until then, we are open to support a strengthened status for Palestine in the United Nations. This would be an important step towards the creation of a new state. It would also represent an additional commitment by the Palestinians to the negotiation process, reinforcing the confidence needed to reach a definitive and global Peace Agreement.

Portugal has a singular sensibility in our dialogue with the Middle East. We will use this sensibility and our close relations to assist in finding the only result that is of interest to all of us: peace.

Mr. President,

The groundbreaking transformation we are witnessing the Arab World open a new scope of opportunities, in the first place for the people of the region, but also for countries like Portugal with a deep and historic affinity with the southern shore of the Mediterranean and the Gulf region.

We are building our common future, one which involves a new European Neighbourhood Policy and a renewed Union for the Mediterranean. Our ambition is for a new economic and commercial relationship, with reinforced exchanges in the social field and a new solidarity for democracy, shared in a spirit of mutual respect and advantage.

Portugal went through its democratic transition in 1974. We recognize how important the support and encouragement from external partners was to us. We are ready and available to share that experience now as a sign of our support and solidarity. An important element of that experience was the contribution and full participation, on equal footing, of Portuguese women to the post-revolutionary political process.

We should continue united in our support for the transition processes and reforms underway in the Middle East and the Maghreb, responding in a coordinated manner to the needs identified by our partners. I naturally think of Egypt and Tunisia, which are preparing to undertake free and democratic elections. I am confident that these two countries will know how to meet expectations.

We note with profound regret, however, that many innocent people in the region are paying too high a price for their legitimate aspirations. The disintegration of the situation in Syria is unacceptable and unsustainable. We praise the action of the Human Rights Council, but we believe that the Security Council should also take a position in this regard. We also urge the Syrian government to put an end to the violence and repression against the legitimate democratic aspirations of its people.

The democratic transition underway in the Middle East only makes the impasse on the Iranian nuclear issue that much more evident. It is imperative that Tehran understands that it is time to change, that it is time to cooperate and that this is in its best interest and in the interest of international peace and security.

Mr. President,

In the face of current global challenges, we need a strong and efficient United Nations, one that is able to cooperate closely with other regional and international organizations whose scope of action has deepened and broadened over the last years.

At the outset, such cooperation can be deepened with the European Union which only recently gained a new legitimacy in the United Nations after the recent adoption of a General Assembly resolution, which we welcome. But this cooperation should also be developed with other organizations, such as the African Union, the Arab League and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP). This community of eight nations on four continents, united by a language spoken by more than 240 million people and counting, has a strong vocation to strengthen multilateralism in the service of peace, security and democracy.

I would also like to recognize the efforts of the Alliance of Civilizations, a United Nations initiative that, under the leadership of a former Portuguese Head of State, Jorge Sampaio, has contributed greatly to the amelioration of relations between societies and communities from different backgrounds, assisting in the promotion of a culture of dialogue, tolerance and mutual comprehension at the global scale.

Mr. President,

The United Nations is us, all of us; we all have a responsibility and the duty to preserve global peace and security and to defend human rights in accordance with the Charter.

The promotion and protection of human rights, as I have already referred, is one of the priorities of our foreign policy, in line with the other values expressed in the UN Charter. We take an active position in this field, denouncing those situations where civil and political rights are being violated and recognizing the social aspirations of the neediest and most vulnerable populations of our planet, as reflected in our initiatives on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

I would also like to express the importance we attach to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, as well as the human rights of women, including their participation in political decision-making.

This position is fruit of a broad consensus and great interest given to human rights in our country. It is not a coincidence that the High Commissioner for Refugees and two other important mandate-holders in the field of human rights are Portuguese – the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children and the Special Rapporteur on the Human Right to Water and Sanitation.

It is in this spirit that we decided to present our candidature to the Human Rights Council for the 2015-2017 biennium. We participated actively in the creation of this organ of which we have not yet been members. We are convinced that our participation in this body would serve as a value-added in the defence of our shared principles.

Mr. President,

Allow me to conclude by renewing and strengthening Portugal's commitment to international law and the peaceful solutions to conflicts, values that guide our action in and

out of the Security Council, the other organs of the United Nations, international organizations and in our bilateral relations.

Thank you.