

Statement by Mário Soares at the signing of Portugal's Treaty of Accession to the European Communities (Lisbon, 12 June 1985)

Caption: On 12 June 1985, on the occasion of the signing of the Treaty of Accession of Portugal to the European Economic Community (EEC) and to the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or Euratom), Mário Soares, Portuguese Prime Minister, outlines the role that Portugal intends to play in Community affairs.

Source: Archives historiques du Conseil de l'Union européenne, Bruxelles, Rue de la Loi 175. Adhésion du Portugal, 07.151 (469): 07. Dossiers 537-549, Boîte 66. Cérémonie de signature (12.6.1985) du traité d'adhésion du Portugal aux Communautés européennes, Dossier n° 544.

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Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, in these four hundred year old cloisters, Portugal's past and future meet. By holding here the historic ceremony for the signing of the treaty concerning Portugal's accession to the European Communities we wish to emphasize that faithfulness to our roots and traditions is a vital prerequisite for building the future.

Symbol of Portuguese – and, hence, European – culture and a reminder of an enterprise that was once both dream and reality and “brought to the world new worlds” this monument, which is part of the world's artistic heritage, reflects well the genius of the Portuguese people and provides a unique reminder of its centuries-long history. It is from here that, now the imperial era has closed, we shall symbolically make a new departure, with Portugal returning to the European fold and playing its rightful part in its dynamism and progress.

I believe that the signing which you have just witnessed can, without exaggeration, be regarded as one of the most significant events of contemporary Portuguese history. For the Europe of the Communities, at the same time, it constitutes a decisive move demonstrating confidence in itself, an increase in its potential and an opening-up of the Community towards the outside world.

To Portugal, acceding to the EEC means making a fundamental choice for a progressive and modern future. But let no one believe that it is a choice made for the sake of convenience. It will make heavy demands on the Portuguese, while at the same time opening up completely new prospects for development to them. On the other hand, it is the natural outcome of the process of democratization of Portuguese society set in train by the Revolution of 25 April 1974, the so-called 'Carnation Revolution'. It is also the consequence of the ensuing decolonization which, although 20 years behind that of the other European countries and despite the inevitable traumas and aberrations which accompanied it, today allows us to maintain brotherly and fruitful relations with those African countries where Portuguese is the official language, all of which are signatories to the Lomé Convention.

Our prime task from now on will be to keep narrowing the gap which still separates us from the more developed European countries, by creating for the Portuguese people genuinely European patterns of life and welfare. To this end, we need to continue on the path we have followed over the last two years: to pursue a rigorous and realistic financial policy, to fight for political stability as a key factor of economic recovery and modernization and to strengthen our democratic institutions, notably through national solidarity, social co-operation and dialogue.

The overwhelming majority of the Portuguese people is well aware of what democracy has given it, even in terms of material achievements. It knows that a democratic life-style at local, regional and national level is something of inestimable value, which it is important to preserve and develop. Full and pluralistic democracy was for Portugal, as for Spain, an indispensable precondition for membership of Europe. But such democracy, which has now been achieved, has established the definitive democratic institutional framework for the two Iberian countries, so prone in the recent past to disastrous dictatorial adventures.

The floor will now be given to the younger generations, to whom elevating prospects of progress and dignity are opening up. As beneficiaries of European integration, they will now have to apply themselves to the major national task of development and modernization, so that Portugal can be a country of freedom, civic coexistence and social justice.

I am honoured to have been the one who signed Portugal's application for membership of the EEC, on behalf of the Government of the republic, back in March 1977. Eight years on, after a long and difficult, but ultimately successful, negotiating process, I now have the historic opportunity of signing the Treaty of Accession. We have succeeded. Others have left their names associated with an endeavour common to

successive constitutional governments and which demanded enormous perseverance. I should like to mention Sá Carneiro, Amaro da Costa and Mota Pinto, to name only those who have left us. But it would be unjust at this moment to omit the name of Ramalho Eanes, who throughout his two terms of office as president of the Republic remained faithful to the grand national aim of joining the European community.

The last two years of the negotiations were particularly arduous and demanding. It behoves me to praise the contribution of Ministers Ernâni Lopes and Jaime Gama and the co-ordinating ministerial teams, which displayed tireless dedication and exceptional effectiveness. The Committee for European Integration – and its Chairman, António Marta – also deserve praise for the enormous amount of work they did and for the spirit of co-operation they showed, which was exemplary.

During the eight centuries of its history, Portugal has known other periods like the present one - periods in which an ineluctable national challenge succeeded in galvanizing the nation. This is once again the situation today, when there are no new worlds to discover, but men and living conditions which need to be transformed and improved and new technologies to be developed. Yet the reactionaries remain, just as Camoes depicted them in his famous poem, systematically rejecting all that is new, a challenge or a risk.

I should like my words to be heard by the working people of Portugal, for whom new vistas and unsuspected opportunities for progress and social justice are opening up. The future of Portugal is in the hands of the farmers, the workers, the scientists and men of culture, the executives, the intellectuals, the technicians, the artists and, above all, the young – in short, of all the Portuguese, men and women alike – and from now on there will be no lack of stimulus or of the requisite assistance for its construction. We are no longer on our own. We will not lack European solidarity – as was recorded today by distinguished representatives of the Member States of the Community of Twelve. However, it is in work, in organization and in the capacity to adapt to new competitive situations that the Portuguese will have to find the strength needed to modernize productive structures and to change attitudes.

The next few years will be a period of enormous collective effort – let us have no illusions about that – if we are to ensure Portugal's integration into the Community under favourable conditions. We shall have to work hard to bring this about and we cannot allow ourselves the luxury of falling out over secondary issues. We shall have to focus on the essentials and avoid dissipating our energies on conflicting action; nor should we overlook the values and personalities at our disposal. All of us will be needed. In order, however, to make what is necessarily a collective effort both profitable and effective, we shall have to be able to maintain stability and security, both values vital to a democracy. We shall maintain close contacts, at all levels, with the Europe of Twelve and experience in this area has a value such as we may not legitimately disregard.

For all that, in the integration of Europe Portugal will not only be on the receiving end for with its ancient culture and with the talent of its people it will contribute to the building of Europe, an enterprise with which our emigrants throughout Europe have in any case long been associated.

For us, the Europe of the Communities will not just be a common market for goods and services. We see it as a dimension of freedom and respect for human rights, as an autonomous and cohesive political entity whose duty it is to play a part of leader and moderator on the international scene. The role played by the European Community in the North-South dialogue will now be greatly strengthened by the accession of Portugal and Spain, whose history was interwoven with those of the peoples and civilizations of other continents, who contributed so much to the propagation of European values throughout the world and whose languages are spoken today by some 450 million souls.

Portugal, for which the brotherly links with Brazil and with Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa remain of paramount importance, is certain that accession to the EEC will help to impart fresh dynamism to Europe's co-operation with Latin America and Africa. We shall also keep faith with our place on the Atlantic seaboard, in the light of our rights recognized under the present Treaty in a vast zone of the Ocean, the enormous potential of which there is an urgent need for us to exploit.

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me one final word of thanks to the ten countries which are welcoming us today, to the President-in-Office of the EEC, Bettino Craxi, to Minister Andreotti and the President of the Commission, Jacques Delors. I should also like to take advantage of this solemn moment to greet our kinsman Spain, represented here by my dear friend President Felipe González, on a day on which, for Spain as for us, there opens a new and decisive chapter in that country's very long and abundantly rich history. The destinies of Spain and Portugal have almost always run parallel; sometimes our paths have crossed fleetingly but much more often we have ignored or been unaware of each other. With our simultaneous entry into the EEC a new phase of wider bilateral co-operation is opening up to us, based on mutual respect, solidarity and reciprocal advantages. This is the political will of both States which will be not only heightened but actually made easier by our simultaneous entry into the European Community.

I should like to express once more to all those present – and most of all to our foreign guests – the thanks of the Portuguese Government for the honour they do us in attending this ceremony. Here, I should like to express one last wish: may this day prove to be, in the history of the European Community, a day of good omen for the future of Europe. May that future be one of solidarity and unity, may it promote progress and social justice and may it provide an element of peace and stability in today's troubled world.