

Address given by Portuguese Prime Minister José Sócrates to the Assembly of the Republic (Lisbon, 27 June 2007)

Caption: On 27 June 2007, in the Portuguese Parliament, Prime Minister José Sócrates presents the Programme of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the second half of 2007. In his address, José Sócrates emphasises the three key aims of the programme: treaty reform, the modernisation of the European economy and society, and the strengthening of Europe's role in the world.

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Presentation of the Programme for the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union – Address given by Portuguese Prime Minister José Sócrates to the Assembly of the Republic (27 June 2007)

Mr President of the Assembly,
Distinguished Members

1. A Presidency for a stronger Europe

On Sunday Portugal will assume the presidency of the European Union. On this occasion **Portugal will reaffirm its firm commitment to the European project.**

We all know that the construction of Europe is in Portugal's interest. I am from a generation of politicians and citizens who were born into the European project and who continue to believe that it is one of the most important and generous projects both for Europe and for the world.

I therefore want to clearly state the driving force behind the Portuguese presidency of the European Union: a stronger Europe for a better world.

We want a Europe that overcomes the deadlocks that have held it back. A Europe that is able to face up to global challenges and take advantage of the opportunities of these times of change. A Europe that knows how to build new bridges of dialogues, with a more audible and decisive voice in a world in need of stability, justice and development.

The Portuguese presidency therefore revolves around three key axes: the reform of the Treaties; an agenda for modernising European economies and societies, and the strengthening of Europe's role in the world.

2. The reform of the Treaties

The main challenge is clearly that of picking up the Treaty reform process. The agreement reached in the last European Council gives a clear and precise mandate, as always considered necessary by Portugal.

This is why I have decided to convene the Inter- governmental Conference, beginning on 23rd July, back to back with the EU Council of Foreign Ministers. Our aim is clear: to keep up the momentum of the agreement reached in Brussels and to approve a new Treaty for the European Union as quickly as possible.

The mandate adopted by the European Council introduces **a very significant change: the nature of the Treaty to be negotiated has changed.** Indeed, the **idea of adopting a Constitutional Treaty has been abandoned** in favour of a return to the tradition of amending existing Treaties. **The new Treaty will be more of an International Treaty as opposed to a constitutional treaty and is not intended to totally substitute the Treaties in force.**

On the other hand, the **mandate allows the previously agreed institutional balance to be maintained**, with changes only to the date when the so-called double-majority weighting of votes in the Council comes into force (which is postponed to 2014, with a transition period until 2017). In addition to this balance, the conditions in which the so called "Ioannina Compromise" have been improved, thus safeguarding the position of clear minorities in Council of Minister votes.

The mandate **also abolishes the European Union pillar structure**, and a single legal personality has been formed which is a noteworthy simplification.

The Common Foreign and Security Policy maintains its own decision processes; there has been a full

return to the mechanism of structured cooperation on Defense, and the **High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (no longer the Union Minister for Foreign Affairs) will become Vice President of the European Commission with responsibility to chair the Council of Foreign Ministers.**

In relation to European citizenship, the mandate adopted **retains the recognition of the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights** as legally binding, with the exception of its jurisdiction in the United Kingdom. It is not too much to say that by adopting a legally binding Declaration of Fundamental Rights that puts civil and political rights on an equal footing with economic, social and cultural rights we not only strengthen the basis of European citizenship but also reassert our civilisational values, common to the identity of all Europeans.

However, **I would like to highlight an important innovation in this mandate: the strengthening of the role of National parliaments in their control of European institutions' respect for the principle of subsidiarity.** This is a preventive mechanism that foresees that when half of the National Parliaments raise objections to a Commission initiative on the grounds of violating the principle of subsidiarity, the Council and the European Parliament are obliged to deliberate specifically on the maintenance or withdrawal of this proposal. The national Parliaments will be strengthened by the treaty we will prepare.

Mr. President
Distinguished Members

A mandate is not a Treaty. Europe has chosen the path through this mandate. But it has yet to progress along this path. The work awaiting us is demanding, intensive and complex. It is our job to finish this task. And I have no illusions: negotiation and coordination will always be necessary – and we must be ready for the problems that can arise and which so often become apparent as we enter the home straights of the negotiation processes. **But we are starting out confidently. We are ready to conduct the work of the Intergovernmental Conference so that Europe gets a new Treaty, fit for new times.**

3. An Agenda to modernise the European economy and society

Albeit important, the reform of the Treaty is just a part of our task. Europe needs to invest more in an agenda of modernisation. Once again, **our concern will be centred on the “Lisbon Strategy”. We are going to actively contribute to a new cycle of the Lisbon Agenda,** which will be approved in spring 2008 during the Slovenian presidency. But as we prepare this new cycle, we will maintain the balance between the three components on that Agenda: economic, social and environmental.

Furthermore, **we will launch the debate on a new technological action plan regarding energy, focusing especially on energy efficiency.** We will highlight the role of bio-fuels, in particular in the framework of the relationship we wish to enhance between the European Union and Brazil. Equally, we will go forward with preparations of the EU's position in the conference to debate the **Post-Kyoto reference framework.**

We shall also place the questions of **water shortage** and **drought** situations on the European agenda and re-launch the debate on the foundations for an effective **European maritime policy.**

We also intend to **give the social dimension of the “Lisbon Strategy” the relevance and visibility it deserves.** Ten years after the launch of the “European Employment Strategy”, the time has come for further debate on the best ways to **coordinate employment policies with a view to fostering the creation of sustainable work posts in the current context of global competition.** This line of action of the Portuguese presidency will be closely articulated with the qualification of human resources, the conciliation of work and family life, the fight against poverty and also with the debate on the so-called **“flexisecurity”** which is on the European agenda. This debate should be guided by the search for comprehensive and balanced solutions, translated into general and common principles common at European level, which take into account the diversity of the social realities in the different member states of the EU.

The **strengthening of police and judicial cooperation in the fight against terrorism and organised crime** is also on our agenda. But we cannot allow security demands to detract from openness and tolerance in our societies. It was Portugal that proposed the technological solution (SIS-ONE4ALL), conceived by a Portuguese company. This enables new member states to adhere fully to the Schengen area so that borders with these countries will disappear at the end of the Portuguese presidency, thereby fulfilling one of Europe's greatest wishes – the free circulation of people.

4. Strengthening Europe's role in the world

Mr President
Distinguished Members

The current international situation requires the European Union to assume special responsibilities. Europe must be a more active protagonist on the international stage.

In the second half of 2007 unavoidable decisions must be taken about delicate questions on the global agenda (the future of Kosovo; Iran's nuclear dossier; the humanitarian crisis in Darfur...) **with particularly relevant bilateral Summits: India, China, Russia and the Ukraine.** The relationship with the United States will also be closely monitored in the context of the strategic relevance of **transatlantic relations.**

But there are three initiatives in the field of European foreign policy where the Portuguese presidency wants to leave its mark: the Summit with Brazil, the Euro-Mediterranean Conferences and the Summit with Africa.

We have chosen to start the Portuguese presidency with a new EU summit: the EU-Brazil summit. We will certainly leave a very important mark in the Union's foreign policy with this summit which will bring coherence to Europe's relations with the emerging economic powers. Europe already holds annual summits with China, India and Russia. With the Portuguese presidency, Brazil will now be added to these summits. With this initiative, Portugal is making its specific contribution to enriching European foreign policy, fostering a formal relationship which is of mutual benefit to Brazil and Europe.

Cooperation with the South in the framework of the Barcelona Process and the New Neighbourhood Policy is another of our priorities, hence the **EUROMED Conferences.** They emphasise the importance given to **re-launching an in-depth policy debate with our partners on the southern margins of the Mediterranean, in particular on the subject of development and migration.**

Lastly, I would like to draw attention to our presidency's biggest initiative: **Portugal proposes to convene the second EU-Africa summit in December.** Europe has not had a structured institutional dialogue with Africa for seven years – an incomprehensible failing in European foreign policy. If there is one country that must take a stand against this and do everything to overcome the situation, it is Portugal. We were already central to the first, and last, Summit in Cairo in 2000 and we want yet again to be the foundation for a new strategic partnership between Europe and Africa, aimed at sustainable development, peace, combating endemic diseases and a balanced and mutually advantageous management of migratory flows.

5. Building consensus for the European project to move forward

Mr. President
Distinguished members

We are aware of the fact that we are assuming the presidency at a delicate moment in the international stage and that there have been deadlocks and bottlenecks in Europe for far too long. We must be strict, professional and disciplined in this presidency. Presidencies in themselves do not resolve all the problems. But they can make a difference if they assume clear goals, show humility in the pursuit of these goals and a will to face up to problems; if they foster the indispensable consensus between all member states so that the European project can move forward.

We are firmly resolved to do this. We will be permanently working with the European Parliament and we are counting on close cooperation from the Commission and, more specifically, from its President, Mr. Durão Barroso. We can also count on the support of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Javier Solana. And I do not doubt the determination and commitment of all our European partners.

I believe above all in the quality and professionalism of our diplomacy and of all the specialists at different levels who will assume the responsibilities of the presidency. Moreover, I know that I can rely on the support of the Portuguese for whom the European project has always represented a major political goal based on a broad national consensus.