

## Address given by José Sócrates on the Portuguese Presidency of the Council (Brussels, 18 December 2007)

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[José Sócrates] Mr President, President of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, the Portuguese Presidency and I myself have reached the point of reporting on our Presidency to Parliament with the feeling that we have done our duty. I think you will agree with me when I say that Europe and the Europeans have good reason to feel satisfied with political developments over the last six months. Indeed, I am convinced that Europe today is stronger, more self-assured and more confident. At the end of these six months it is a better Europe; better in relation to itself, but also better in relation to the rest of the world.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, you are well of the three priorities of the Portuguese Presidency. The priorities, I would recall, were the Treaty and the EU-Brazil and EU-Africa summits. As I had the opportunity to say here in the session launching the Portuguese Presidency, they were always the three main priorities of the Portuguese Presidency, right from the beginning.

I am very pleased to tell you that we have achieved all the goals we set ourselves for these six months. But let us begin with the goal that was the most important of all: the Treaty. The Treaty, the new Treaty for Europe. This was always the top priority, and the new Treaty that we signed in Lisbon and named the Treaty of Lisbon is, of course, a treaty that resolves Europe's institutional deadlock, a treaty that responds to Europe's institutional crisis. I must tell you that no sign of confidence was of greater importance for the European project, for Europeans and for the European economy than overcoming that deadlock and that crisis.

But this Treaty also responded to the three major challenges facing Europe. First, the challenge of European citizenship. The challenge of affirming the values underlying our political project and that affirmation of values and of European citizenship is contained in the Charter of Fundamental Rights that we proclaimed in this Parliament but which has legal force through its inclusion in the Treaty of Lisbon. That was the first challenge.

The second, of course, was to give Europe better decision-making ability. Anyone who is familiar with Europe clearly understands that a Europe of 27 had to change its rules. Changing the rules, keeping the rules democratic, but allowing the institutions to respond more effectively and efficiently on behalf of all Europeans to the challenges of the new world. This challenge was also addressed by the Treaty of Lisbon.

Finally, the challenge of having stronger and more capable institutions, institutions equal to the new demands that Europe is facing. This challenge is also now addressed by the Treaty of Lisbon. And if we want to attempt to sum up the Treaty of Lisbon it is precisely here that we should do it. It is a treaty that meets the three major challenges: transforming Europe into a political project that affirms its values and affirms European citizenship, a Europe that is now better able to take up the challenges of modern times, that has the conditions for more effective decision-making, and also a Europe that has strengthened its institutions to respond to Europeans' aspirations and also to what the world expects of Europe.

This is an important treaty for Europe, but it is also a treaty that makes Europe stronger to serve a better world. It is not only a treaty for the Europeans, for the European economy, it is also a treaty that gives a clear signal to the world that Europe is back and is back to pursue a European project in a form to inspire many continents all over the world. The Treaty: this priority was achieved under the Portuguese Presidency. But while the Treaty was perhaps the greatest contribution that we made to a stronger Europe, I would like to emphasise the other two priorities.

First, the summit with Brazil. Why Brazil? For the simple reason that EU external policy already included annual summits with India, Russia and China but has never had an annual summit with Brazil. By approving a strategic partnership at that summit we are transforming the EU's external policy into a more coherent and more understandable policy. We now have a policy with BRIC – Brazil, Russia, India and China – that serves a Europe that wants to be a global political player. This summit with Brazil and the strategic partnership that we established has enhanced Europe's external policy and established better conditions to

bolster the European economy, and also to endorse the values and aims of the European project.

Thirdly the summit with Africa. The Africa summit. When we embarked on the Africa summit we were well aware of the difficulties we were facing, but we overcame them because it was clear from the start that we were right, that Europe was paying the price of seven years with no political dialogue with Africa, that this was bad for Africa, bad for Europe and bad for the world. There was no reason not to have a broader and global political dialogue with Africa. And perhaps Portugal's sensitivity made it better placed to appreciate that this was a mistake. We corrected this mistake with the Africa summit. The summit was a success, because for the first time in the history of the world, Europe has a joint strategy with Africa. Let us not deceive ourselves; it is not a European strategy for Africa, or vice versa. No, it is a joint strategy of both continents and a joint strategy that is being pursued on the basis of five main themes that are important to both continents: peace and security, climate change, human rights, areas that are – migrations too, excuse me, I was forgetting that area of major importance – those are the five structuring themes of a political dialogue with Africa that, as I said, concerns Africa, Europe and also the world as a whole. But we did not restrict ourselves to approving a joint strategy, we also laid down an action plan and a mechanism for implementing the strategy, and we are now setting up an institution between the European Commission and the African Union, the African Union Commission, to enable them to work together to implement what we have agreed.