

## ***Closing Session of the EU-Africa Summit***

### ***Speech by the Prime Minister of Portugal***

***José Sócrates***

**Lisbon, 9.12. 2007**

Mr. President of the African Union,

Mr. Presidents,

Prime Ministers,

Your excellencies,

Mr. Presidents of the European and African Parliaments; of the European Commission and of the African Union Commission,

Mr. Mayor of Lisbon Town Hall,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to speak from the bottom of my heart.

I believe that this Lisbon Summit was a truly extraordinary event. This is how I feel and I want to share this with you.

This Summit is in itself a result: it was able to overcome a deadlock of many years and finally gathered almost all European and African leaders here in Portugal – and this is a political fact of the greatest significance for the dialogue and future of the two continents.

But the real reason why this Summit has become extraordinary is that it was able to gain a place in history. Yes, we met. But the real novelty is that it was a meeting of equals, meeting eye to eye, and with a new spirit. And the message of hope that really leaves this Summit is founded on this new spirit.

I can say that of everything that I have heard over the last few days, in and out of this room, the idea that has been repeated most, shared most by European and African leaders meeting here, is that this Summit indeed represents the turning of a page in history. A history of many encounters and disencounters, an often painful history but also a history of progress and freedom. A history of coexistence, of sharing and mutual learning which has made a common heritage in our memory and in our culture.

The Lisbon Summit will undoubtedly leave its mark on Europe-Africa relations. There will be a before and an after this Summit.

It is true that the new page in history that we have turned here is yet to be written. And this is now our greatest responsibility. But we are setting out towards this new phase with a new spirit – and with a new project.

We have met all the broad objectives that were proposed and we have done what has never been done before: we have adopted a Joint Strategy, an Action Plan and a monitoring mechanism for its implementation; and we have assumed an agenda to confront the many and serious challenges that lie ahead: from peace and security to governance and human rights; from development to climate change and migration.

This was a Summit with a voice. It was not a Summit of compromised silences. No. This Summit had the courage to identify and face up to the problems, with transparency and sincerity. It gave voice to those who needed to speak, as it should be in an open and mature political dialogue.

It was a **Summit that gave voice:**

- To human rights;
- To refugees and immigrants;
- To Africans' legitimate aspirations for development;
- And to all those who aspire to a fairer globalisation and a better future for the generations to come.

This Summit leaves us with the Lisbon declaration. A declaration that sums up our determination, our vision and our commitment. But it leaves above all the Lisbon spirit. A spirit of cooperation, of ambition, of friendship.

Lisbon has been the most African of European cities in the last few days. I want everyone to know how proud I am of that. I want to salute the Mayor of Lisbon Town Hall, here present, and thank him for the help he has given in holding this Summit. But I also want to thank the people of Lisbon. I know what they have had to put up with so as to make this Summit a success. So, I want to thank them on behalf of you all. But I am sure that the people of Lisbon, like all Portuguese, are proud that we have organised the biggest and most important political event to date in Portugal.

Allow me, on a personal note, to thank the team from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Minister Luís Amado, HE João Cravinho and Portuguese diplomacy. It has been a year of hard work in which we have had to face many difficulties. But it has been worth it.

As I had the opportunity of saying in my opening address, Portugal has yet again known how to be the perfect bridge between Europe and Africa. And yet again it was the Portuguese language uniting two continents.

But the success of this Summit is the success of a meeting of wills. The will of the European Union and the will of Africa and the will of the African Union. I thank my good friend, President John Kufuor, for his commitment to this joint effort and salute all African leaders through him.

I also thank the European Heads of State and Governments for your presence, which has been so significant, and for your engagement in this new strategic partnership with Africa.

And I thank all of you who have set distance aside so that we could meet here in Lisbon. But I believe that while the geographical distance has never been our greatest problem, it is clear to everyone that, as of this Lisbon Summit, political distance is no longer the greatest obstacle to our common future, a better future for the people of Europe and of Africa, in a changing world.

In 2010 we will meet again at another Summit to assess the path we have taken and to look to the future. And that meeting will be held very near here. In Africa.