

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

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

***José Sócrates***

**Lisbon, 8 December 2007**

Mr. President of the African Union,  
Mr. Presidents,  
Prime Ministers,  
Madam President of the Pan-African Parliament,  
Mr. President of the European Parliament,  
Mr. President of the African Union Commission,  
Mr. President of the European Commission,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The moment has arrived to formally open this second Summit between the European Union and Africa. Let me start by wishing you all once again a warm welcome. I want to greet the people of Europe and Africa that each one of you is representing here today. It is because we are thinking about them and about the future generations of the two continents that we are meeting here.

And there can be no better place. It was through Lisbon that Europe met Africa. And it is in Lisbon that we are meeting again.

I know that I am expressing the feelings of all Portuguese when I say that my country is proud to be today, once again, the perfect bridge between Europe and Africa. Once again, it is the Portuguese language that unites the two continents.

We have come to this Summit to meet as equals. We are equal in the representation of equally sovereign States in the community of Nations. Equal in common human dignity which transcends all differences and where no culture is less important and no civilization superior. But we are also here today with an equal political responsibility: the responsibility we each have before history and the people we are representing here.

Seven years have passed since the Cairo Summit. This deadlock has prejudiced the cooperation that is necessary between the two continents and has prevented us from facing together the challenges of today's world.

I have always believed that this situation cannot go on. I have always felt that we have the urgent duty to re-launch political dialogue between Europe and Africa. That was why I made the decision to make this Summit one of the top priorities of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union. I am well aware of the difficulties, the doubts and the obstacles that we have had to overcome. But although at first the idea of this Summit came up

against fears and scepticism, the truth is that it ended up generating the dynamics of a reencounter between our two continents.

This is no longer simply a top level political meeting. This Summit has created a movement. A movement of young people, trade unions, businessmen, scientists, local authorities, non-governmental organizations that have mobilised to discuss their common problems here in Lisbon. The message of this movement of social dialogue is clear: there is no time to lose. The time to build new solutions for the future is now.

But it is your presence, it is the strong presence of European and African Heads of State and Government at this Summit that sends the clearest political signal that we were right: this is indeed the right moment. And I know that you are not here merely in response to an invitation from Portugal, an invitation from the European Union or an invitation from the African Union: everyone is here today in response to an invitation from history. History that is challenging us and inviting us to write together an entirely new page in the relations between Europe and Africa.

Mr. President of the African Union  
Your Excellencies

This Summit must be an ambitious one.

We have a Joint Strategy for approval at this Summit. It is the first time that Europe and Africa have shared a common vision for the future. We have defined principles and guidelines for this new partnership which will from now on shape our relations. This Joint Strategy has shaped a framework of external relations that is unparalleled between the two continents.

But we have to set our sights even higher. We want a Joint Strategy, but we also want to ensure that it is implemented. This is why we have presented an Action Plan to this Summit with new and concrete goals and measures. And it is also why we have created a new monitoring mechanism that ensures the implementation of this Strategy.

The new Joint Strategy assumes the central challenges for the two continents. But it also requires political dialogue that is candid, mature and open. A dialogue with no taboos in which no subject is prohibited. It was in this spirit that we chose the themes for the agenda of this Summit.

Firstly, peace and security. This is where everything begins. Without peace and security there is no development, there is no respect for life. It is up to us at this Summit to open a window of

hope for the dreadful drama of refugees and for the tragedies that are unfolding in Darfur and in Somalia.

Secondly, governance and human rights. Fundamental rights are a direct expression of the dignity of mankind. Today they are not the exclusive heritage of any single continent. They are the universal heritage of mankind and it is up to us to preserve, affirm and defend them. And we will also do this here at this Summit. That is why we placed human rights at the very heart of our Strategy and our agenda.

Thirdly, development questions. We have a very clear challenge: meeting the Millennium Goals. It is true that we have already taken steps along the right path but it is equally true that we still have a long way to go. The time has come for everyone who assumed these commitments to work harder, more diligently, investing more.

Fourthly, fighting climate change. This is one of the greatest global challenges for political cooperation. What is assumed in this chapter of our Strategy is a commitment to act, but also a commitment to cooperation between Europe and Africa, with a view to at a global agreement. An agreement that can set new targets and call on everyone to participate while respecting the principle of differentiated responsibilities.

Finally, the subject of migration. This is perhaps the subject where the lack of dialogue and political cooperation between the two continents in recent years has been most keenly felt. We cannot remain indifferent to the drama of desperate immigration that so often destroys lives and families. We must be able to regulate these migratory flows together, to encourage legal immigration and combat clandestine immigration, fostering the integration of immigrants in the host societies with dignity and supporting development in the countries of origin. This is a pressing challenge and must be made a top priority in the Action Plan for cooperation between the two continents. Here again Human Rights are at stake.

Mr. President of the African Union,  
Distinguished colleagues,

This Summit was put off for too long. And we all know why. For a number of years, relations between the European Union and Zimbabwe made it impossible, due to the serious situation in that country. But I firmly believe that with the new political instruments introduced with this Summit, with the political dialogue that we have renewed here, and with our joint effort we will be able to achieve better results on all fronts of our common agenda: in human rights, but also in peace, in security, in development, in climate change and in migration.

This is an agenda about the future. And our greatest responsibility is to the future. Let us focus on the future: we have decisions to take and a path to choose. And it is only by taking the path of dialogue and cooperation that we will be up to the challenges facing us, as well as the movement and the expectations triggered by this Summit.

I would like to finish with some words of gratitude. I thank all the Heads of State and Government present, the European and Pan-African Parliaments; the African Union Commission and the European Commission and also all those who contributed to the success of this Summit.

I want to give special thanks to the President of Ghana and African Union, John Kufuor, for his unceasing engagement in preparing this Summit – so much so that it ended up coinciding with his birthday. Allow me, Mr. President, to wish you a very happy birthday!

Mr. President, it is a privilege to co-chair this Summit with you. In the belief that through it we will form the basis of our common future. Confidently, responsibly, ambitiously.