

GRAVAÇÃO

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC
HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2022
OPENING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF ECOSOC / MINISTERIAL
SEGMENT OF HLPF
'BUILDING BACK BETTER FROM THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)
WHILE ADVANCING THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT'
NY - GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL, 13 JULY 2022**

Mr. President of the Republic of Botswana (Mokgweetsi Masisi)

Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations (António Guterres)

Mr. President of the United Nations General Assembly (Abdulla Shahid)

Mr. President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (Collen Vixen Kelapile)

Excellencies,

Allow me to acknowledge the work of the Economic and Social Council, which feeds into this High-Level Political Forum.

Sadly, last minute contingencies made my physical attendance in New York today impossible.

Portugal is currently ravaged by forest fires, as the heat and fire-prone conditions are likely to continue for the next days.

Such extreme events are a reminder of the overwhelming force of climate change and their frequency imposes the need to think about what we can do better.

Due to Covid-19, we are taking a heavy toll in areas such as the fight against extreme poverty, quality of health, education, and gender.

SDG projections for 2022 are gloomy and may get worst if we combine it with predictable inflation, as well as the food and

energy crises worsened by the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation.

We are nevertheless pleased to share that the considerable human and material burden, which was put on the Portuguese people to guarantee access to education during the pandemic, has paid off.

Preliminary data shows that the results in this sector were very satisfactory under the existing circumstances.

Before Covid, gender disparities in the access to education were becoming less pronounced.

Basic education itself was a growing reality for more and more children around the world.

Remarkable progress was being achieved in many areas of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development over the last decades.

When Covid-19 struck, many predicted Humanity would reveal its worst nature.

If we compare this crisis to previous global crises, we realize that the international community was able to act fast, pulling together through unprecedented forms of cooperation and solidarity.

Such a reaction, but also the progress achieved before Covid-19, proved that it is possible to change the course of events if we collectively commit ourselves.

Think big.

Look well ahead.

Respect values and principles.

Protect the Planet.

Give others a hand.

Act now.

Act together.

Only doing so, will we be able to get back on track to address the major concern and objective of leaving no one behind.

As the spectre of war in Europe came back to haunt us all, collective action in an interdependent world is now more challenging than ever before.

Allow me now to dwell a bit longer on one of the Sustainable Development Goals, which is of the utmost importance for our planet as a viable home for humankind: the Ocean.

The Ocean covers 70% of our planet's surface. For centuries, it has been kind to us, by providing for our basic needs, by supplying us with food, by stabilizing our climate, by bridging different continents and by integrating us in a globalized world.

Accumulated knowledge tells us assertively that it is high time to attend to the Oceans' needs, in return for what it has been providing us.

Portugal is committed to accelerating and scaling up Ocean Action for the conservation and sustainable use of Our Ocean, as we are just coming out of UN Ocean Conference in Lisbon.

We have been actively contributing to the negotiations of a new Global Treaty aimed at protecting marine biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

I take this occasion to call for an ambitious agreement without delay!

I also recall that we have committed to protect 30% of our seas by 2030 using the best available science, respecting the needs of marine species, and protecting a significant portion of the ecosystems.

With this goal in mind, in 2021, the OSPAR Convention approved the "Cascais Declaration" creating a new Marine Protected Area of the Atlantic.

This area is vital for seabirds and will cover almost 600 thousand square kilometres in international waters off the Azores.

At the same time, the region of Madeira increased the integral protection area to 2,700 square kilometres around the Selvagens Islands, our largest marine natural reserve.

We need urgent and ambitious solutions to drive the transformation to sustainable blue economies, as well as the scaling up of nature-based solutions, ecosystem-based approaches to support the resilience, restoration, and conservation of Our Ocean.

Exploring the full potential of the Ocean and marine biodiversity, while curbing and containing the harmful impacts of

human activity can only be achieved through coordinated international action involving all relevant stakeholders.

In the spirit of the Paris Agreement and the Ocean-Climate nexus, Portugal has been prioritizing climate neutrality actions that set our ambition beyond the European Green Deal recommendations to avoid the use of fossil fuels.

The acceleration of extreme weather events caused by climate change has brought the need for an integrated blue economy to our doorstep much sooner than expected.

The future is here, and the sooner we act, the better.

Clean energy collected in or from the sea, such as wind or wave energy, and sustainable aquaculture are promising options to ensure food and energy security, thus addressing some of the world's most pressing scarcities.

Our individual actions will be nothing but intentions unless integrated under a collective effort towards Sustainable Development.

As the UN Secretary General eloquently puts it “interconnected challenges can only be addressed by an equally interconnected response”.

This sense of shared goals has inspired Portugal to become one of the founding members of the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, the "Ocean Panel".

We are also active in the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, a benchmark in generating better and more effective ocean science, and literacy.

New generations are eager for results from our side.

Future generations depend on them.

In this regard, the outcome of the United Nations Ocean Conference that took place in Lisbon between June 27 and July 1st, should make us proud of our ability to work collectively.

Among other strategic goals, I would emphasize the following six: 1) Preventing marine pollution of all kinds; 2) Restoring and maintaining fish stocks at levels that produce at least maximum sustainable yield in the shortest time feasible; 3) Strengthening scientific observation and data collection efforts, especially in developing countries; 4) Promoting innovative financing solutions to drive the transformation to sustainable ocean-based economies; 5) Empowering women and girls in progressing towards a sustainable ocean-based economy; 6) Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from international maritime transportation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sustainable development provides the most complete definition of a better future for all.

The improvement of local evaluation tools allows us to better adjust public policies to regional specificities while bringing together the public, private and social sectors as we move responsibly from present to future, from local to global.

As part of Portugal's strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, I am proud to announce that Portugal will present its second Voluntary National Review at next year's HLPF.

As I have said before, the future is here.

I have no doubt about that. We cannot delay our action any longer, and we need to put future generations front and centre of our life on planet Earth.

Thank you very much.