

**Welcome note by Comendador Nazim Ahmad, Diplomatic  
Representative of the Ismaili Imamat to the Portuguese Republic**

*Lisbon Forum – Ismaili Centre, 16 November 2023*

**DRAFT**

Distinguished guests of the Lisbon Forum

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great satisfaction that, in my capacity as Diplomatic Representative of the Ismaili Imamat to the Portuguese Republic, I convey to you a warm welcome to the Ismaili Centre and to the Lisbon Forum, a flagship event organised by the North South Centre of the Council of Europe.

Queria saudar, com amizade, a presença do Senhor Secretário de Estado dos Negócios Estrangeiros e da Cooperação, Dr. Francisco André, um dos grandes responsáveis pelo estreitamento das relações de Portugal com o Ismaili Imamat, bem como a Dra. Edite Estrela, Vice-Presidente da Assembleia Parlamentar do Conselho da Europa, e uma cara amiga desta Casa.

I will also highlight the presence and extend a warm welcome to:

- Mr. Bjorn Berge, Deputy Secretary-General of the Council of Europe,
- Ambassador Francesca Camilleri-Vettiger, Permanent Representative of Malta and Chair of the Executive Committee of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe,
- Mr. Abel Campos, Deputy Registrar of the European Court of Human rights of the Council of Europe, and also to,
- The many leaders and members of European institutions, members of the diplomatic community and international organisations, civil society and activists, who are with us today.

I also address a special note to Doctor Adelino Silva, Executive Director of the North-South Centre, with whom we maintain a close relation, to acknowledge the work he has been developing, and also the work of his team.

*Human Rights, Environment and Economic Crimes: Youth at the forefront*” is a very fortunate choice for the theme of this year’s Forum, at a time when multiple challenges are in the horizon.

During the last years, the scope of Human Rights has been extended to cover concerns with environment, a key component in ensuring the future and well-being of our society.

Climate change – or, better yet, climate emergency - is already before us, carrying with it questions we still do not have answers for, awareness regarding the future of our planet and of humanity.

The Ismaili Imamate, and the agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network, are guided by ethical principles which also seek to find solutions for our common causes and challenges, grounded by the respect for life, compassion, the promotion of education and the concern for sustainability in all its dimensions, including environmental, social and economic.

The efforts of the agencies of the AKDN benefit communities globally, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or creed, and aim to promote values as vital as dialogue, critical thinking, intellectual humility, and local perspective in a global context.

Our aim is to empower citizens with the capacity to become agents of change for the common good.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The collaboration between the Ismaili Imamate, the AKDN and the North South Centre has been long and is founded on shared values.

Both the Ismaili Imam and the North South Centre have their Seats in Lisbon, a city which has an environment that enables to see beyond borders and foster dialogue.

I am extremely happy that the reflection you are about to start takes place here, at the Ismaili Centre, designed to serve as a place for sharing knowledge and intellectual development and to celebrate our shared values.

I conclude my brief remarks by quoting His Highness the Aga Khan at an address in 2017 when accepting the Asia Society's Lifetime Achievement Award, and which I find particularly important for current moment:

Quote: "Any leader of any global community hopes and prays for one thing – peace.

Peace in every community and in every country in the world, so that men and women can live in safety, build their future with strength and courage, and hope and wisdom. These are the values that the leaders of my community, my institutions and myself, are intimately linked with and will continue to work for many, many decades ahead." Unquote.

Once again, welcome to all and I wish you, as we say in Portuguese, *bom trabalho!*

Muito obrigado.