

Award Ceremony of the 2023 North-South Prize of the Council of Europe Speech by Ambassador Camilleri Vettiger

President of the Portuguese Republic,
President of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal,
Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe,
Head of the Portuguese delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,
Distinguished Parliamentarians of the Portuguese Assembly,
Distinguished Laureates of the North-South Prize,
Executive Director of the North-South Centre,
Members of the Executive Committee of the North-South Centre,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

“Injustice anywhere, is a threat to justice everywhere”.

These **powerful words** by Martin Luther King Junior, **echo louder** than ever today.

While we are **privileged** to be in this beautiful Ceremony in such an impressive building – thanks to our very kind hosts – and celebrating a happy occasion, there are millions of people around the world:

Living in a war they never signed up for,

Witnessing destruction on a daily basis,

Experiencing loss, pain and suffering,

And facing grave injustices **we cannot possibly fathom.**

Our world feels increasingly divided today,

And the future more **uncertain** than ever,

As we see a rise in mistrust, in tensions, in hatred, and in violence across the globe, with an increasing disregard for the fundamental values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

It is in these particularly difficult and challenging times, that the mission of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe – dedicated to fostering intercultural dialogue, cooperation, mutual understanding and solidarity while conveying and promoting the core values of the Council of Europe – that is human rights, democracy and the rule of law – becomes all the more essential.

And through the initiative of the North-South Prize, we are reminded of the importance of speaking out, standing up and acting against injustices and human rights' violations – as we honour those who courageously do so; who devote their time, energy and resources to defend, promote and expand a culture of human rights' protection, solidarity and cooperation – without which there cannot be a just and equitable world.

Which is why today, we celebrate **two such remarkable champions of human rights**: Ms. Amina Bwayash and the Global Campus of Human Rights.

Ms. Amina Bwayash is a **visionary** in the realm of human rights. She has made remarkable strides in her advocacy and as President of the National Human Rights Council of Morocco, she has been instrumental in pushing forward significant reforms. Her unwavering commitment and political engagement towards abolishing the death penalty and ending the use of torture, as well as in combating violence and discrimination against women and girls, has transformed the lives of many - not only in Morocco but also on a wider scale in the region.

Turning to the Global Campus of Human Rights, this consortium **exemplifies the transformative power of education** in advancing human rights. With its network spanning over a hundred universities worldwide, the Global Campus has been pivotal in educating young minds and future leaders about the importance of human rights. By integrating human rights education into academia, they foster a profound understanding among young people as **the foundation of a more just and humane world**. And they do it through the lens of different regional and cultural perspectives, from Europe, the Balkans, Africa, Asia, the Pacific, the Caucasus, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Arab world.

Awarding **the North-South Prize** in **this** Parliament is especially symbolic. As this prestigious building is **synonymous** with Portuguese democracy – a democracy that had to be **so valiantly fought for** 50 years ago – through the carnation revolution that changed the face of European politics, that triggered transitions to democracy elsewhere and **inspired** human rights movements around the world.

The generations that lived through those times are part of the valuable memory that reminds us that human rights, democracy and the rule of law **cannot be taken for granted**.

And so, as we celebrate the distinguished achievements of our two Laureates, **let us draw inspiration** from their dedication and unwavering resolve, and be reminded **not to take for granted** these fundamental values and the tireless efforts and firm commitment **needed to safeguard them**.

All the crises and challenges facing our world today **need us all** to step up our efforts, and to use our energy, resources, and platforms to speak out, stand up and act **against any injustice**, and to unite in solidarity with those enduring such hardships.

This brings me to the end of my speech, which I will close in the same way I opened - with a quote from Martin Luther King Junior who said:

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“life’s most persistent and urgent question is:

“What are you doing, for others?”