

Award Ceremony of the 2023 North-South Prize of the Council of Europe **Speech by Verónica Gómez**

Your Excellencies,

- President of the Republic, Professor Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa
- President of the Assembly of the Republic, Mr. José Pedro Aguiar-Branco
- Chairperson of the Portuguese Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Ms. Edite Estrela

Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Bjorn Berge

Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the North-South Centre, Ambassador Francesca Camilleri

Honourable members of the Assembly of the Republic and special guests

It is a privilege to accept this year's North-South Prize, on behalf of the governing bodies of the Global Campus of Human Rights, an association of universities based all over the world, united by the conviction and the task to promote universal human rights with regional and interdisciplinary perspectives.

This year, the prize is awarded in a context of bilateral armed conflicts and humanitarian crisis with regional and global ramifications; of erosion of democratic values; of hostility towards human rights defenders; of existential uncertainties involving not yet fully understood forms of information technologies and the steady unfolding of the climate crisis.

Yet, it is in these contexts where the knowledge and training of humanitarian workers, public officials, international civil servants, professionals of multiple disciplines, and active citizens, shine through the obstacles (material, legal, economic, political) to make a difference by saving lives in emergency situations, by ensuring a better and sustainable life for their communities, by pursuing justice in the face of injustice.

Education is essential to achieving peace, democracy and the rule of law, social justice, development, and respect of individual and collective rights. The recognition of human rights by national and international law, protects all persons without discrimination. Ensuring that these protections are duly enforced, requires on the one hand that all branches of government act in an informed and coordinated manner; and on the other hand, that the population understands how to exercise their

rights and how to hold the authorities as well as other individuals accountable when these rights are violated, as part as a culture of human rights.

A culture of human rights is an ethos infused with the aspirations, convictions, principles and praxes based on equality, justice and sustainability. The building of this ethos rests upon our progressive understanding of the environment through science and of our own social experience of coexistence within our own families, our own communities and with other communities and with other species in our planet.

Building a culture of rights based on equality, justice and sustainability has not been a task free from regression. That is why education –only acknowledged as a right that should be available to all in the XX century, but still not ensured for all even in the XXI century— is a fundamental tool in this process.

The ever-growing academic community represented by the Global Campus seeks to make a meaningful contribution to educate, engage, mobilise and ultimately advocate for, and amplify human rights literacy. In this task, the Global Campus seeks to transcend any North and South dichotomy: we are one institution made of diverse components located in the North and the South, but that collaborate on an equal footing, and thrive on cross fertilisation. Together, the diverse components of the Global Campus make human rights speak in many tongues but with a common heart and mind, towards a joint vision.

On behalf of the governing bodies of the Global Campus of Human Rights, our thanks to the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe for awarding this prize as a recognition to role of human rights education.

A warm thanks also to the Assembly and President of the Republic of Portugal for hosting this ceremony in a gesture that reinforces our shared culture of human rights.

I leave you with the Secretary General of the Global Campus, Professor Manfred Nowak.

Thank you