

President of the Portuguese Republic,  
President of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal,  
Secretary General of the Council of Europe,  
Vice-President of 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,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel **deeply honoured** to participate for the first time in this ceremony.

As Chairwoman of the Executive Committee of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe – I cannot but express **my sincere gratitude to the Portuguese authorities** – for their unwavering support to the North-South Centre and for hosting once again its annual North-South Prize Ceremony in such a prestigious setting –

**MUJTO OBRIGADO !**

The North-South Prize of the Council of Europe is a symbol of recognition for individuals and organisations whose exceptional efforts have contributed to the promotion of the Council of Europe's fundamental values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

– and honours those who are particularly dedicated **to the betterment of society – within countries or across borders** – and our laureates today are a clear example of each.

In a context of geo-political turmoil and rising climate insecurity, the 2022 Prize recognises the paramount work of the Association of Ukrainian Cities and of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – the IPCC.

Before the brutal war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine started, the **Association of Ukrainian cities, founded over 30 years ago** was already a driving force in the decentralisation reform and in building local democracy in the country.

Since the start of this aggression, Ukrainian cities have not only been an example **of fortitude, courage, and bravery**, but also proof that solidarity and cooperation begins locally.

Today, the Association of Ukrainian Cities **plays a leading role** in responding to the urgent needs of Ukrainian municipalities.

It provides them with basic services, humanitarian aid, and support for families, while starting the long-run work towards restoration.

It also cooperates with the civil-military administration to ensure that draft laws regulating the functioning of local authorities are fully aligned with the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, thus upholding democratic values **even in times of war**.

**Mr Vadym Boychenko**, testimonies like yours, illustrate the hardships being faced by Ukrainian Mayors in the ongoing illegal, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression against your country.

Today's Prize pays tribute to the **commendable efforts and resilience** of the Association in these challenging times, while we share a **united message of solidarity and support** with you **and all** those affected by the brutal aggression that continues to be waged by Russia.

Our second laureate, **the IPCC**, with its rigorous research, has been at the forefront of shaping our understanding of our planet's future.

The findings of its most recent report, the Sixth Assessment Report, are sobering – **Sobering but not Surprising.**

This report concludes :

- 1) That human influence is unequivocally causing climate change.
- 2) That Climate change is affecting every inhabited region in the world.
- 3) And yet, those who have contributed least to it are being disproportionately affected.

It is a **call for action – to prevent** the loss and damages we will continue to experience if we do not act fast.

We have all seen just this year how the extreme weather events have become more frequent and intense – from floods, droughts, landslides, and wildfires to heavy storms –

which have **wreaked havoc from North to South** – making it harder for communities to cope, adapt and rebuild, especially in conflict-affected areas.

Taking the right action now and in close cooperation **within and between countries, and across borders** could result in the transformational change we need to survive.

And so today's award of the North-South Prize to the IPCC – **through you Professor Jim Skea** – is a reminder of the transformative power of science, and a recognition of IPCC's dedication to the pursuit of truth, dissemination of knowledge, and promotion of a **sustainable and equitable future for all.**

**Both** the ramifications of the war of aggression against Ukraine and the consequences of climate change affect us all, but not equally.

And so there is a **need to come together and bridge our differences**, and that is what makes this Prize so relevant – as the North South Centre has a long experience and strong commitment to bridging divides and raising awareness about global interdependence, cooperation and solidarity.

With our **recently adopted new strategy**, the Centre intends to intensify these efforts further, to ensure greater engagement and stronger cooperation with neighbouring regions; and to share the Council of Europe values, standards and tools beyond European borders.

As **we celebrate and congratulate you**, distinguished laureates, let us take this opportunity to reflect on our shared responsibility as representatives of international organisations, governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities, civil society and ultimately as global citizens.

Ladies and gentleman,

It was the former President of Portugal, Mario Soares, also a former laureate of this North-South Prize, who once said,

**"Only those who give up fighting are defeated."**

Thank you **for not giving up**.

Thank you for being **an inspiration to us all** to do our part for a better future.

I thank you for your attention.