



Speech by Sara Amaral
on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of
the North-South Centre at the Council of Europe
on 10 December 2019

Dear Ambassador Manuel MONTORBIO Chair of the Executive Committee of the North-South Centre,

Mr José CAROÇO, Executive Director of the North South Centre of the Council of Europe

Ms Rocio Cervera, Deputy Executive Director of the North South Centre of the Council of Europe

Dear Ambassadors here today,

Dear fellow panellist, Ms Vera DUARTE, Ms Lora PAPPA, Mr Jos LEMMERS and Ms Gabriella BATTAINI-DRAGONI,

Let me first thank you for the invitation to be here today with you all celebrating the 30 years of the North-South Centre and jointly applauding the great work it has been doing in fostering collaboration in the global south.

I am truly grateful for the opportunity I had 7 years ago to do a traineeship in the Youth co-operation programme in the North-South Centre. As a young graduate of International Relations, you have a world of opportunities in front of you, where your professional path can be a bit of everything and you feel overwhelmed and lost. I was fortunate enough to have done this traineeship that shaped who I am



today personally and professionally. As a trainee, I supported the Youth Cooperation manager, at that time, Andreia Henriques, who I am very thankful for, for teaching and mentoring me the way she did it. In my 6 months as a trainee, we implemented the African University on Youth and Development, in Cape Verde; the one in Mollina, the Africa-Europe Youth Platform Meeting and we did also the pilot University in the Mediterranean. It was 6 intense months, with an activity almost every month, but the joy and energy that characterize the youth field made it so smooth. It was at the African University that I then meet the Portuguese National Youth Council, who was a partner of the University implementing a leadership training activity for Portuguese-speaking national youth councils.

When I implemented my first activity in the NSC, I knew straight away the field I wanted to work on: the youth field. The NSC represented the first step into a new challenge. Everything I had learned back in University, I could see a direct implementation of it: the negotiations at the international level, both with Countries, but also with civil society; the programme management oriented to achieve concrete and tangible outcomes and above all, I was seeing direct impact on the people participating into these processes. I can clearly state that it was because of the North-South Centre that I am working in the youth field since then.

After I finished the traineeship, I was offered a job at the National Youth Council, as an International Policy Officer, where I then worked on the other side of the coin: as a partner of the North-South Centre. I then moved quite a bit, having worked for the Iberoamerican Youth Organisation and then decided to move to Australia, where I could move fields, but still decided to work with the youth, but this time from a different angle: the employment field. In Australia, I was then awarded an International Fellowship, where I decided to go to Brazil and the US and learn about good practices in innovative youth employment models.

Today, I feel very fortunate to realize that I'm combining my passions and expertise in youth cooperation. This is what the North-South Centre means to me: the important step I took 7 years ago in an overarching career arc of working in the youth field.



The North-South Centre should feel very proud of the positive impacts it has in everyone's lives, from the young people it empowers, for instance, Aya Chebbi, who took part in the ToT in Cape Verde and who is now the African Union Youth Envoy; but also the way it influences the processes and puts youth as one of its top priorities.

I take the opportunity here today to acknowledge with joy the progress made by the North-South Centre in putting the Africa-Europe Youth Cooperation back on the agenda again! We are in a crucial moment to push it as Portugal will host in the first half of 2021 the Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the Africa-Europe cooperation will be one of the priorities of the Portuguese Presidency. The real impacts of this cooperation lead by NSC are evident and the Portuguese National Youth Council, as it was before, will continue to be a partner the NSC can count on. Africa has the majority of the youth population in the world and this cooperation is crucial in fostering the capacities of these new generations, in contributing to global citizenship based on the principals of mutual understanding, respect, and democracy. North-South Centre is the actor best placed, due to its quadrilogue approach and recognition among civil society, to coordinate the Africa-Europe Youth Cooperation, proving young people the opportunity to build their capacities as leaders of their communities, through spaces such as the Universities on Youth and Global Citizenship. We, as partners, value the co-decision and bottom-up model that NSC has implemented, where civil society defines priorities, their activities and has a true say in the implementation and development of the Universities. The Universities are a key space for the development of leaderships, but also where the youth ecosystem gathers and where cooperation is built. The NSC is as an institution uniquely placed as an arm to the outside of Europe, playing a crucial role in promoting intercultural dialogue, the principles of the rule of law and democracy beyond our borders. From Mollina, with its global scope, to the more regional University in the Mediterranean, each has their essence and their strength. I know by experience that the Universities are effective tools in youth empowerment and development and providing the means for Young people to access their rights.

Dear NSC partners, we are following your view that young people should be the protagonists of their own stories, with freedom, means, and support to express themselves, to create and to interact with others. Together, we can allow young people to participate, be empowered, achieve their potential to become whatever they dream of, in any country, without the frustration that, for some reason, they are not the priority of their countries or the global community.



We want to go further, we want a community where our sense of belonging is not trampled by bureaucracy, participation is not vetoed by the lack of democracy and where the doors are not closed by diplomacy. We want a community that opens a world of opportunities to all, to make our future a shared one and not one decided by few and a world made of Global Citizens.

The North-South Centre, together with its partners, has that power: to bring communities together, to empower youth to be active in their countries and communities and to foster solidarity among us all!

Thank you!

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author of this speech and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe declines to accept any responsibility for the information it contains which does not constitute a professional or legal opinion.

©North-South Centre of the Council of Europe 2020