

North-South Prize Ceremony

Lisbon, 2 December 2020

Speaking notes for Mr Rik Daems, President, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Mr President of the Republic,

Mr President of the Assembly of the Republic,

Distinguished laureates,

Honourable guests, ladies and gentlemen,

→ It is an honour to participate in the Award Ceremony of the North-South Prize along with

- **Mr Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, the President of the Republic, and**
- **Mr Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, President of the Assembly of the Republic.**

→ **For 25 years, the North-South Prize** has been recognising women and men who make an outstanding contribution to promoting North-South **solidarity**, to **upholding human rights** and **developing dialogue** between cultures and societies.

→ **Human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.** Therefore, in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, solidarity, including between North and South, acquires a special importance.

Because in the global and interconnected world we live in, the COVID-19 public health emergency affects everyone of us. **Every individual must enjoy dignity and the same fundamental rights and freedoms.** This is the basic principle on which a humane and human rights society is based.

→ If there is one lesson that we have learnt from the pandemic it is the **importance of multilateralism and international co-operation.**

Unilateral action does not bring sustainable, effective or sufficient solutions.

→ **Solidarity and fundamental values** – these two notions should guide our action in response to the crisis.

- **Solidarity** – because no one can cope with the crisis alone and it is our duty to help each other in these difficult times.

- **Fundamental values** – because democracy, human rights and the rule of law **cannot be allowed to become the collateral damage of the pandemic.**

⇒ Isolationism and authoritarianism should not become the **new “normal”**.

⇒ Respect for human dignity and fundamental rights, the principles of pluralism and freedom, as well as the legal safeguards of the rule of law are the **“red lines” not to be crossed** even in times of emergency.

Ladies and gentlemen,

→ Our **commitment to solidarity and for human dignity** can be best demonstrated through **individual action where it is most needed.**

Hence, the symbolic importance of awarding the North-South Prize to our laureates.

→ I would like to praise **Ms Nabila Hamza** for her tireless efforts to **combat inequalities, to uphold gender equality and to promote sustainable development**, in particular by advocating against climate change.

Your commitment and your efforts to address the environmental challenge are particularly dear to my heart. Because **Environment is a Human Right** and every individual on our Planet – and the future generations – have the right to live in a healthy, safe and clean environment. Thank you for championing this cause – you have our full support.

Your outstanding contribution to **upholding gender equality** also deserves our appreciation. This is especially true when we are marking the **Days of Activism against Violence against Women**. Violence against women is the most ignoble manifestation of inequality. Guided by the spirit of solidarity and by the respect for fundamental human dignity, we must stay united to combat this scourge.

→ Let me now congratulate **Mr Leoluca Orlando, the Mayor of Palermo**.

If I were to think about an example of a challenge which requires North-South solidarity the most, migration comes first to my mind. And when I think about migration, I think about Turkey, Greece, Malta, Italy, Spain, Portugal – countries that are on the frontline of managing mixed migratory flows which are rapidly growing, including due to climate change.

Managing migration requires a human-rights based multilateral approach, not least because every individual, wherever he or she comes from, should enjoy the same fundamental rights and freedoms and the same standards of protection.

Palermo is an outstanding example of successful integration of migrants, through dialogue and respect for their fundamental rights. Thanks to Mr Orlando's efforts, the city of Palermo has given a voice to migrants by associating them – through the "Council of Cultures" – to the management of the affairs of the city. This is a great example of North-South dialogue and solidarity and an initiative that deserves to be replicated!

Ladies and gentlemen,

→ **Solidarity, human dignity and fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as co-operation:** these are the notions that are at the heart of the North-South process.

→ **The commitment of our laureates is a great example of how individual action can help uphold universal, indivisible interdependent and interrelated human rights.**

→ Let us therefore pay tribute to their efforts by awarding them the North-South Prize. **Congratulations!**