

## Intervenção da Secretária de Estado da Igualdade e Migrações

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Madam/Mr. President

Distinguished panelists

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

### I. INTRODUCTION

Portugal congratulates the United Nations on the organization of this International Conference on Population and Development, and on the **30th anniversary of the fruitful Cairo Action Plan**. We also salute the progress achieved so far through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compacts for Migration and Refugees - instruments on which we base Portuguese public policies on Equality and Migration.

We therefore embrace migration as a right recognized in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** – the right of people to mobility. That is, we acknowledge migration not just as a phenomenon, but as an immense civilizational challenge transversal throughout human history. We also recognize the extraordinary opportunity to welcome within our societies the unique richness of diversity and its undeniable contribution to economic, social, and cultural development.

It is on this premise that the **pillars of Portugal's policies** for the reception and integration of migrants lie, with emphasis on five key-elements:

1. An **integrated and intergovernmental approach to migration**, following a whole of government logic, treating migration as a cross-cutting issue that extends beyond border management and security concerns. Instead, it is deeply embedded in the structuring of integration and inclusion processes;
2. A commitment to the active and democratic participation of migrant communities themselves, represented in the **Council for Migration** - an advisory body with recognized legal status, since 1998, with an active role in the construction and monitoring of policies and programs in the field of migration;
3. The investment in **proximity responses**, in partnership with municipalities and the civil society, reinforcing a whole of society approach, which has been in place since 2003. Currently, this approach includes a network of 156 Local Centres for the Integration of Migrants throughout the country, in addition to the National Centres, operating under the One-Stop-Shop model since 2004;
4. The establishment of national strategies for migrant integration since 2007, including the current **National Plan for the Implementation of the Global Compact for Migration**, currently under revision. Since 2014, these national strategies have been developed in conjunction with **Municipal Plans for Migrant Integration**, following a bottom-up approach.
5. The publication of **statistical reports on migrant integration** since 2014, addressing the European Commission's concern to ensure that all Member

States have indicators and mechanisms for monitoring migrant integration, and which currently covers more than 300 indicators across 15 dimensions of the multidimensional process of migrant integration.

## II. CHALLENGES

In this alignment, and without losing sight of the challenges faced by States truly committed to migration, it is important to highlight that in Portugal, **for seven consecutive years, we have registered an increase in the foreign population** (781.915 residents, representing a 11.9% increase in 2022 compared to the previous year). Since late 2015, Portugal has maintained a position of solidarity, humanism and shared responsibility by welcoming refugees through all mechanisms, in partnership with the European Union, the IOM and the UNHCR, including the proportional and large-scale response to the humanitarian emergencies in Afghanistan and Ukraine.

In this context, we do not leave out the strategic importance of migration in addressing **demographic aging**, a characteristic shared by European societies, including Portugal. Migration plays a vital role in meeting the labor needs, as it primarily involves **individuals in their working and fertile age** (from 200 nationalities), with a significant impact on **contributions to the Social Security** system (exceeding €1.5 billion in 2022, accounting for 8% of total contributions). Furthermore, migration contributes to the revitalization of rural areas and has a **positive effect on the birth rate**, which increased by 8% in 2022.

We also do not omit, and value, among the characteristics of migratory flows, the **feminization of migration**, with a particular emphasis on protecting the

rights of girls and women, either alone or with children. We also extend our efforts to safeguard the rights of **unaccompanied foreign children and young people**, whose vulnerabilities have deserved dedicated responses for reception and integration in Portugal.

In this regard, we recall all the work carried out in Portugal – by the governmental areas of Equality and Health - together with civil society, towards the prevention and **combat of the harmful practice of Female Genital Mutilation**. It is also important to emphasize that the promotion of equality between women and men, as well as non-discrimination, are considered priorities as ethical, legal, and constitutional imperatives, in the defense and guarantee of fundamental rights for all individuals. This is clearly expressed in the **National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination**, through its action plans: a) equality between men and women, b) preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence; c) preventing and combating discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics.

Having come this far, it is important to note that parts of this narrative are familiar to us, as a nation of emigration. However, it is now also an honor for us to witness, as a destination for the numerous and substantial communities of immigrants and refugees that we have welcomed, the challenges that have been the most recent focus of the Portuguese state, highlighting four major measures:

1. The establishment of a **new Agency for Integration, Migration and Asylum**, as of 29 October, which, in addition to the significant dimensions mentioned so far, adds the dimension of documentation. This marks a

fundamental step in integration, essential for the migrant population to exercise their legal rights;

2. The **promotion of legal, regular, and secure migration channels** through recent changes in the Law on Foreign Nationals. Examples of these changes include the creation of job seeker visa and the issuance of residence permits for citizens of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), without prejudice to mobility agreements with CPLP countries and others like Morocco and India;
3. The creation of the **Observatory on Racism and Xenophobia**, an independent entity following on from the current National Plan to Combat Racism and Discrimination;
4. The **fight against human trafficking and migrant smuggling networks** through coordinated and multidisciplinary actions of monitoring and inspection on the ground.

### III. Conclusions

To conclude, and despite the political contexts across Europe, Portugal is **part of the group of countries that value the development of integration policies for immigrants**, considering immigration as a 'good' or 'very good' factor for the country's development.

In this respect, **Portugal** has responded positively, ranking among the **few European countries with the lowest percentage of respondents identifying immigration as the country's main issue**.

It is within this framework that Portugal has advocated for **a constructive and flexible position in support of the structural reform of the European migration and asylum system**, with respect for human rights and including all individuals.

Thank you very much for your attention.

**Isabel de Almeida Rodrigues**

Secretária de Estado para a Igualdade e Migrações