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**Intervenção do Secretário de Estado Adjunto e da Defesa Nacional, Jorge Seguro Sanches, na sessão de abertura da conferência de Encerramento do Ciclo de Conferências “NATO aos 70: Passado e Futuro”**

Universidade Católica, Lisboa, 27 de fevereiro de 2020

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to start by welcoming Ambassador Tacan Ildem, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy.

Your presence is much appreciated. I believe this is a sign of how strongly the Atlantic Alliance values Portugal and its contribution to the organization.

It is for me a great honor to be here on behalf of his Excellency the Minister of National Defence, who cannot be here due to the Council of Ministers taking place in Bragança.

I would particularly like to thank the Portuguese Atlantic Committee and its President, Mr. Miranda Calha. Thank you for your strong work in national defence, in the Portuguese Parliament, for your job as President of the Defence Committee, and as member of the Supreme Council of National Defense as well as Secretary of State for Defence. Now that you have retired from the Portuguese Parliament, thank you for offering some of your time and experience in matters of national defence to the Portuguese Atlantic Council, making a valuable contribution to the key task of developing a stronger security culture in Portuguese society.

Especially when we live in times when there are important voices in NATO countries questioning the relevance of the Atlantic Alliance, the work of the Atlantic Council is more important than ever. We need institutions from civil society, for civil society, that promote strong transatlantic bonds and a better knowledge of the crucial work that our Armed Forces do in NATO.

Let me also congratulate the Institute of Political Sciences of the Catholic University, in the person of Professor João Carlos Espada, for the quality of its work.

I would also like to thank all those involved in organizing this important event to celebrate the foundation of NATO. It is paramount to celebrate NATO's achievements and address the challenges ahead.

Portugal is committed to NATO, as a founding member of the Atlantic Alliance, and it became a pillar of our defence policy for these last seventy years.

In the next few minutes, I want to highlight how NATO remains a pillar of the Portuguese defence policy today and that we are strongly committed that it will remain so in the future.

First, NATO has thrived for seventy years not because there were no tensions or crisis between its Members States, but because the Member States of the Atlantic Alliance have always been able and willing to manage their differences. NATO has the right institutions to overcome differences between its members. It has a system of regular mutual consultation. It has a strong tradition of seeking consensus.

The willingness of Member States to work together in pursuing their shared interests and in defending their shared values has indeed been crucial in NATO's success.

Alliance's survival key lies in its ability to adapt and maintain its relevance, which has allowed the Alliance to have an effective influence on the decision making and decision taking in many events.

At the same time, the Alliance has reinforced its political dimension as well as its global approach.

This brings me to my second main point: as the Portuguese Prime-Minister has underlined in the recent NATO Summit, in London, we need the Atlantic Alliance more than ever.

Our values as well as our interests are being challenged by very powerful and aggressive actors. Two regions of particular concern are the Sahel and the Gulf of Guinea, where poor populations are especially vulnerable to the impact of climate change.

Simultaneously, the challenges of digital transformation of States and organizations, also raise important concerns about space, cybersecurity, protection of telecommunications infrastructure, including 5G, and the development of disruptive technologies.

In the face of all these threats we need true friends, we need firm allies. More than ever we need a strong Atlantic Alliance.

My third point is to underline that NATO is still the most robust alliance in the world today. No other security organization can be compared to it. It is not by

accident that NATO expanded from 12 members to 29 today. It is because it provides the most credible security guarantee to its Member States.

In fact, NATO is not just a solid alliance. It is much more than that.

We should always remember that the Atlantic Alliance via its doctrine, training and education, via its regular exercises, via its operational missions in places like Afghanistan, has been crucial in achieving a degree of effective interoperability between the Armed Forces of its Member States without parallel in the world. We are stronger together.

My fourth and final point is to state very clearly that Portugal believes that NATO must have a long future ahead of it. In this sense, while Portugal has benefited from NATO, it has also contributed in a strong way to the Alliance.

For Portugal, NATO remains a cornerstone in the security architecture for the European Union and European countries. It should be noted that Portugal has increased its expenditure in Defence by 29% since 2014.

Prime Minister António Costa fixed the goal of 2% of GDP in defense spending at the Wales Summit in 2016. It should be noted that this “defense investment pledge” is included in the Portuguese Military Programming Law approved by the Portuguese Parliament with a strong majority in 2019 that commits 4,7 billion euros of investment in military capabilities.

But as our Prime-Minister and our Minister of Defence have stated - this cannot be the only indicator of the commitment of Member States to NATO. Above all,

it is important for Member States to be willing and able to engage their military capabilities in NATO missions, as we are doing for instance in providing the rapid reaction force for the security of Kabul airport in Afghanistan.

I would also like to highlight Portugal's commitment to making its contribution, especially with regard to three areas:

The first is the Maritime domain:

We are establishing a new NATO Centre of Excellence in Maritime GEOMETOC, devoted to improving situational awareness in the vital area of maritime security.

The second is Cyberspace:

Since 2019, Portugal is the host nation of the NATO Communications and Information Systems School in Oeiras, whose mission is training NATO military personnel.

The third is the complementarity between NATO and European Defense:

It is important to restate what the Minister of National Defence has recently said about this topic: Portugal is strongly committed to a stronger European defence, but we believe that Europe should develop its strategic autonomy, including its military capabilities, in close articulation with NATO. A stronger European defence and a stronger partnership between the EU and NATO will be a priority for the Portuguese Presidency of the EU next year.

We are concerned with the coherence and complementarity between NATO and the European Union, in order to bring the two institutions closer together at the strategic and operational level.

I would highlight three points:

- That both organizations are committed to cooperate in order to respond to hybrid threats, including in matters of cybersecurity and cyber defense;
- That the European military mobility program contributes to the Alliance's credibility in mobilizing troops to any point on Europe's borders;
- That in terms of Permanent Structured Cooperation, Portugal is particularly attentive to opportunities that reinforce coherence and complementarity between the two organizations.

To conclude,

Many times in the past we saw obituaries announcing the inevitable death of NATO, for instance after the End of the Cold War. These obituaries have always been proven wrong. We should remember the wise words of Sir Winston Churchill, during the Second World War: “There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies, and that is fighting without them”.

However, we should not be complacent. These obituaries were proven wrong because all Member States of the Atlantic Alliance worked together to make sure NATO works. They were proven wrong because all NATO member states showed their commitment to the Atlantic Alliance by investing in efforts to renew and adapt NATO to new challenges, to new threats. This is exactly what we need to do. This is why organizing seminars like this one is so important.

Muito obrigado à Comissão Portuguesa do Atlântico

Thank you to the Portuguese Atlantic Committee.