

Helena Carreiras

Ministra da Defesa Nacional

Intervenção da Ministra da Defesa Nacional, Helena Carreiras, por ocasião da abertura das II Jornadas da Defesa Nacional sobre o Espaço

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I would like to begin by welcoming you to the II National Defence Space Conference. It is with great satisfaction that we gather here today a sizeable community of officials and stakeholders, united by a shared interest in pushing forward the debate on a topic as relevant and as dynamic as Space.

Indeed, this event comes at an important moment in time, in which **the potential of Space as a key asset for Security and Defence is increasingly acknowledged**. The fact that we now take this reality as a given, is a direct reflection of how far we have come. In a short period, our Allies and Partners have set up Space agencies or dedicated services within the Armed Forces; both the European Union and NATO recognized Space as a new operational domain – along with Air, Land, Sea and Cyber; and new policies, institutions, and instruments have since multiplied.

In the meantime, growing geopolitical competition and the dissemination of disruptive technologies, accessible to State and non-State actors alike, have pushed us to become more assertive and more self-sufficient. The fact that critical functions of both governments and the private sector heavily depend on Space, have also increased our awareness over the importance of these developments to our security.

Across the board, **it is quite evident there is great potential in Space. However, there are also significant vulnerabilities** that we need to consider.

The sizeable geopolitical transformations that we are currently witnessing, not only in the Euro-Atlantic area, but also around the globe, are generating multiple repercussions in the way we look at Space. The importance of space-based information used in

support of military operations on the ground, of situational awareness, or of intelligence data, has become painfully visible throughout the war in Ukraine. Other impacts have also been felt at multiple levels, **such as in cyber, communications or data collection**. Different applications, such as navigation or the monitoring of climate and weather, can also be easily affected if Space is not given enough focus.

On the other hand, we are aware that **the physical and functional integrity of Space-based infrastructures can be compromised by hybrid threats**. We must pay particular attention to undue access or interferences by actors with malicious intents. This requires more vigilance, but also more investment in tailored regulation of this global common, particularly in a multilateral environment where the legitimacy of international law is increasingly contested or questioned.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Portugal sees itself firmly anchored in our Atlantic geography. We have important sovereignty and jurisdiction responsibilities in a vast oceanic area. Our main goal is to ensure freedom of action in all operational domains, while securing the Portuguese and Euro-Atlantic maritime area through its surveillance and control. Therefore, we rely on **a multidomain approach, which gives Space its due worth and which takes full advantage of its potential in pursuing our national interests.**

We took the first steps in 2019, when we became founding members of our National Space Agency - Portugal Space, followed by the approval, one year later, of **a National Defence Strategy for Space**. This strategy set out a clear roadmap based on a number of priorities, which included, among others: enhancing the

effectiveness of the Armed Forces through the use of Space; building military capabilities in the space domain in an integrated manner; ensuring public funding for the development of the Defence space sector; **and, of particular relevance for today's proceedings, strengthening cooperation with our Allies and Partners.**

That is how we take the next step forward in the Space domain.

And that is the main takeaway that I hope this conference focuses on: we need to foster even closer ties within the international community and with like-minded partners. That is also why the overall theme for this event involves bringing together different experiences and lessons learned, from several international organizations and key countries who have made significant inroads in Space. **We believe we have much to gain by encouraging further synergies and by avoiding duplication.** That can only be done if we pool our efforts, seek out complementarity

of our activities and pursue interoperability of existing technologies.

That is also why we follow with great interest developments at the EU level. The Strategic Compass was very straightforward in calling for further joint action in a more competitive and contested space environment. In that sense, **we look forward to the upcoming EU Space Strategy for Security and Defence** as a possible baseline to build an even more common understanding of space-related risks and threats, and to make full use of the benefits and opportunities linked to the European space domain.

In parallel, NATO recognized space as an operational domain in 2019 and is already implementing a Space Policy of its own. The new Strategic Concept adopted last year in Madrid, reinforced that our strategic competitors keep on investing in technologies

that could restrict our access and freedom to operate in space, while degrading our own space capabilities.

Our response to this scenario can only be collective. To that end, I can announce that just two weeks ago, **Portugal became a signing party of the new NATO Space Centre of Excellence that France is implementing in Toulouse**. This is precisely the kind of initiative that will allow us to keep up with the space capabilities of relevant partners and to potentially open the doors to even further cooperative programs within NATO. We also strongly support the **Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation**, signed earlier this month, which identifies space as one of the new areas for possible cooperation.

However, we also need to take stock of what we have done internally. That is why we **will assess the implementation of our**

own agenda, with the aim of identifying areas for further improvement.

For instance, in the latest revision of our legislation on the Organisation of the Armed Forces, we established that **the military side of the Portuguese defence space programme should be developed as a joint capability under the leadership of the Armed Forces General Staff**. We hope that the final regulatory decrees, which will allow to complete this process, will soon come to full term, and trigger further developments.

We have also been actively participating in the **European Space Surveillance Initiative and Tracking (SST) Programme**, in close partnership with the Autonomous Regions of the Azores and Madeira. This initiative has allowed us to develop an operational program with dual civil-military characteristics. But as the SST

Programme evolves into a new configuration, we should make use of every opportunity to further capitalize on our capabilities and, when possible, expand them. The **ongoing revision of our Military Programming Law** is bound to open up new possibilities in this regard.

Finally, we need to ensure that Space is elevated to the highest level of our strategic thinking. The National Defence Strategy for Space that I previously mentioned, proved an important milestone in that regard. But the new **National Strategic Defence Concept**, currently being drafted and which will provide a broader framework for the coming years, also needs to consider the level of priority that this specific domain warrants.

The effective implementation of all these different tools and mechanisms will lay the ground for an improved strategic culture

that takes into account possible risks, threats, and opportunities regarding Space. In turn, this will enable us to better adapt our capabilities and responses to crises, thus **making Portugal, our Allies and Partners more resilient in a coherent and collective manner.**

Above all, I hope this event will contribute to us becoming more aware of the opportunities and perils that Space holds, **more cognisant of what we can do together**, and more committed to making the most out of this operational domain. I wish you all a fruitful day of discussions.

Thank you.