



General Assembly

Seventy-fourth session

16th plenary meeting
 Wednesday, 16 October 2019, 3 p.m.
 New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Muhammad-Bande (Nigeria)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly

The President: It is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, who passed away on 3 October. On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representative of Portugal to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of Portugal and to the bereaved family of Mr. Freitas do Amaral.

Mr. Freitas do Amaral is renowned at the United Nations for his leadership as President of the General Assembly. What is more, he is often referred to in his home country of Portugal as one of the founding fathers of modern Portuguese democracy. He played a key role in his nation's democratic process, having contributed to balancing the political spectrum following the Carnation Revolution of 1974. Thereafter, he founded the Portuguese Christian Democratic Party and served for two terms as its President. Mr. Freitas do Amaral demonstrated leadership in various capacities. He also served as a member of the Portuguese Parliament, a member of the Council of State, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Minister for Foreign Affairs.

And, of course, he also served as President of the General Assembly. In his role as President during the fiftieth session, from 1995 to 1996, he was dedicated to ensuring that the United Nations was better equipped,

financed and structured to more effectively serve the people in whose name it was established.

Portugal has lost a great legal mind. He had a career spanning almost three decades as a professor of law at the School of Law at the University of Lisbon and was a founding member of the prestigious Faculty of Law at the NOVA University Lisbon. His passion for administrative law was legendary. He lived a life of probity and public service. He was also a notable playwright and author. Indeed, he left a positive legacy on this Earth. We as a global community are better for his efforts towards serving all of humankind.

At this moment, when the Organization is experiencing self-doubt more often than occasionally, it is pertinent to remind ourselves of the words of Mr. Freitas do Amaral, who said that "the United Nations is worth our praise". May he rest in peace.

I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: It is with great sadness that I join the General Assembly in mourning the loss of Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral. I wish to convey my deepest condolences to his wife and loved ones.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

19-31975 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



Here in this Hall, we remember Mr. Freitas do Amaral as the esteemed President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. It is especially poignant that we are honouring his legacy as the United Nations sets out to mark another milestone, our seventy-fifth anniversary. During the fiftieth year of the United Nations, Mr. Freitas do Amaral left a strong imprint as an advocate for a multilateral approach to solving conflicts, a defender of international law, a supporter of strengthening the United Nations through reform and a promoter of expanding the voices and representation within our Organization.

I was honoured to serve as Prime Minister of Portugal during his tenure as President of the General Assembly. I witnessed how his outstanding leadership at the United Nations enhanced the image of Portugal. It was a point of great pride for the Portuguese people. But that came as no surprise, because the values and spirit he brought here were very much rooted in his pivotal contributions to Portuguese democratic life and to my country's integration in Europe.

Portugal is the vibrant democratic society that it is today because of leaders like Mr. Freitas do Amaral. Following the Carnation Revolution of April 1974, he played a major role as a founder and leader of one of the key political parties of the democracy. As a politician and professor of law, he made a central contribution to the constitutional and legal framework of democratic Portugal. Mr. Freitas do Amaral served in numerous positions in the Parliament and the Government of Portugal, including as Deputy to the Assembly of the Portuguese Republic, Minister for Foreign Affairs on two occasions, Minister of National Defence and Deputy Prime Minister. He was a renowned jurist, brilliant scholar and skilled politician. But, above all, he was a public servant of the highest order and devoted to the service of his country and of democracy. And he was always a professor in his eagerness to share his knowledge and experiences.

Allow me to conclude not with my words, but his. In opening the special commemoration on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, Mr. Freitas do Amaral offered plain-spoken advice to what was at the time the largest-ever gathering of world leaders. He asked the General Assembly to

“Please tell the world that freedom, justice, development and human solidarity are magnificent values worth living and working for. Please tell

your peoples that we must all help each other for the survival and benefit of humanity. Please tell your Governments and Parliaments that, with the necessary reforms and changes, the United Nations needs money to ... function well, and wisdom and generosity from us all to save and help those human beings most in need.” (*A/50/PV.35, p. 2*)

Mr. Freitas do Amaral's words are just as meaningful today as when he said them in this Hall almost 25 years ago. As we honour his legacy, let those words continue to be our guide.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Zambia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Kapambwe (Zambia): I make this statement today in my capacity as Chair of the Group of African States for the month of October.

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing away of His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral on 3 October after a protracted illness. Mr. Freitas do Amaral was a statesman and a leading politician and diplomat who was involved deeply in international affairs for decades. He was a faithful servant of his country, Portugal, which he served in various capacities, including as Foreign Minister and briefly as Prime Minister.

Among his many achievements was being the driving force behind the new Constitution, which was approved in 1982, following the ousting of the military dictatorship in 1974. The constitutional reform removed the ideological references in the country, closed the military's path to power, opened up the economy and created the Constitutional Court. As President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, from 1995 to 1996, he pressed the membership to pay their outstanding dues. His positions and contributions will always be remembered.

Once again, I wish to convey our very sincere condolences to the delegation and Government of Portugal, his many friends and supporters and, of course, his wife and family members.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Vanuatu, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Kalsakau (Vanuatu): As Chair of the Group of Asia-Pacific States for the month of October, Vanuatu

has the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group of States and to join others in paying tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral and celebrate his life and legacy.

The importance of Mr. Freitas do Amaral's political career in Portugal, which spanned more than 30 years, is well known. In fact, he is a central figure of Portuguese modern democracy. Portugal's President, His Excellency Mr. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, described him earlier this year as one of the fathers of Portuguese democracy. A professor of law, Mr. Freitas do Amaral was a pivotal force behind Portugal's new Constitution, approved in 1982.

Mr. Freitas do Amaral served in a series of Governments, holding the key positions of Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence, as well as a brief stint as head of the Portuguese Government in 1980, following the tragic passing away of Prime Minister Francisco Manuel Lumbrals de Sá Carneiro.

Mr. Freitas do Amaral brought with him a wealth of experience in public service when he became the President of the General Assembly in 1995. That coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. As President of General Assembly, Mr. Freitas do Amaral was a staunch advocate for the norms, values and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. His commitment to the United Nations was displayed throughout his presidency, creating a new relevance for the office and advancing the work of the revitalization process of the General Assembly. He also paid great attention to United Nations reforms.

Today we honour his efforts and his unwavering belief in multilateralism, in particular the United Nations. Secretary-General Guterres, who himself is a former Portuguese Prime Minister, sums up his legacy well by stating that

“[h]e was a renowned jurist and scholar and a brilliant politician, wholly dedicated to public service, who left a very strong imprint as President of the United Nations General Assembly”.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Mrs. Maria José Salgado Sarmiento de Matos, their children, the Government and the people of Portugal and the United Nations family for the loss of an inspiring

and dedicated leader. May his memory and the ideals he stood for continue to inspire people around the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I take the floor on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States. It is with great sadness that we received the news about the passing away of His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

Prior to his presidency of the General Assembly in 1995 and 1996, he served as Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal from 1980 to 1981 and 2005 to 2006 and as Deputy Prime Minister of Portugal from 1981 to 1983. Mr. Freitas do Amaral, with his long and rich professional career, played a pivotal role in leading democratic strides in the 1970s. His efforts and determination in upholding democracy in Portuguese political life, as well as promoting peace and stability across the world, will be remembered and remain as a lasting legacy.

On behalf of the members of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to express our deepest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guyana, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Ten-Pow (Guyana): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the States members of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC). The States members of GRULAC wish to express our profound sadness at the passing away of Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, who nearly 25 years ago sat where you now sit, Mr. President, as President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. GRULAC joins the rest of the United Nations family in honouring his memory and paying tribute to his sterling contribution to the work of the General Assembly.

Diogo Freitas do Amaral was loaned to the United Nations by Portugal, a nation that has deep historical ties with the developing countries of the South — in Asia, in Africa and in our own region of Latin America and the Caribbean. Twenty-four years after Diogo Pinto de Freitas do Amaral served as President of the General

Assembly, another native of Portugal, António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres, now leads our Organization.

As a diplomat and political leader serving at various times as Minister for Defence, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister of Portugal, Mr. Freitas do Amaral made an important contribution to the restoration of democracy in Portugal, and is therefore justly regarded by many as one of the fathers of Portuguese democracy. During his tenure as President of the General Assembly, he prioritized reform to ensure greater representativity and encouraged measures aimed at increasing the level of development assistance to the countries of the South. He is also remembered for the role he played in the Organization's efforts to address the financial crisis it was experiencing during his term as President of the General Assembly in 1995 and 1996.

The Member States of Latin America and the Caribbean and their representatives here at the United Nations will always be inspired by the example left behind by Mr. Freitas do Amaral — an example of dedicated and selfless service to his country and to the global community. We extend heartfelt condolences to his family and to the Government and the people of Portugal. May they find comfort in the enduring legacy that he has left behind.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Austria, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Almoslechner (Austria): On this solemn occasion, I have the honour to speak as Chair of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of October. It is with profound sadness and sorrow that we have learned of the passing away of His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, former President of the General Assembly. On behalf of the Group of Western European and other States, the group from which he was elected, I would like to express our deepest condolences to his family, the Portuguese people and the Government of Portugal. Our thoughts and prayers are with them during this difficult time.

Mr. Freitas do Amaral will be remembered as one of the fathers of Portuguese democracy and for his long and distinguished career as a politician and professor of law. As a political leader, he played a leading role in cementing democracy in Portugal after the Carnation Revolution in 1974. Mr. Freitas do Amaral subsequently served as Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister,

Minister of Defence and briefly as Prime Minister of Portugal.

During his tenure as President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, he was particularly engaged with the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly. The Group of Western European and other States is therefore very thankful for his commitment to effective multilateralism.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Gray (United States of America): It is an honour for the United States, as the host country, to be here to pay tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

It is telling that we are all united in speaking here today. Simply put, the professor was someone who brought people together. He played an important role in uniting Portugal after the Carnation Revolution and cementing democracy in his country. He was one of the driving forces behind Portugal's Constitution, and behind amending it in 1982. That was crucial to opening up the economy and creating Portugal's Constitutional Court. He was, without a doubt, one of Portugal's leading statesmen and, as a former legislator, Defence Minister, Foreign Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Prime Minister, he was a leader with a deep commitment to public service.

His life had a strong impact not only on Portugal but also here at the United Nations when he served as President of the General Assembly. The United States wishes to send heartfelt prayers and condolences to his family and to the people of Portugal. He will be truly missed by all of us.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Duarte Lopes (Portugal): First and foremost, I would like to express my country's appreciation to you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative to hold today's tribute to the memory of His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. It was with deep sadness that we learned of the passing away of Mr. Freitas do Amaral, former Portuguese Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Defence and twice Minister for Foreign Affairs.

As has been mentioned here today, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral was a driving force in Portugal's contemporary history as one of the outstanding figures of our modern democracy. In the words of His Excellency the President of the Portuguese Republic, he was "one of the fathers of Portuguese democracy". Through his guidance and wisdom, he left his mark on our nation in a period of challenging political and social evolution. His election to the presidency of the General Assembly in 1995 was consistent not only with the qualities inherent in his national statesmanship, but also with his international standing as a fervent believer in multilateralism.

At that time, the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations was viewed as an opportunity to address a long-awaited reform of the Organization. He embraced that challenge with joy and determination. He went on to become the first President of the General Assembly to reside full-time in New York for the entire duration of the session; it would be difficult to imagine arrangements being otherwise today. In doing so he was not only able to ensure a continuous leadership of this

drive for change, but essentially elevated the profile of the President of the General Assembly and ultimately reinforced the role and the authority of the General Assembly. His plurinational staff was also instrumental in that regard. I would also like to acknowledge that our current Consul General in New York, who is here present today with us, was a member of his team in 1995 and 1996.

Finally, allow me to make a personal remark, as I recall with fondness the time when Diogo Freitas do Amaral was my professor at the University of Lisbon Law School. I can still vividly recall the lucidity of his teachings and the unrivalled clarity of his writings.

To conclude, I wish to convey my country's profound recognition to Diogo Freitas do Amaral and renew, on my own part and on behalf of my team at the Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations, the expression of our heartfelt condolences to his family and friends.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.