

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

TWENTY-NINTH SESSION

Official Records



**2269th
PLENARY MEETING**

Thursday, 17 October, 1974,
at 12 noon

NEW YORK

CONTENTS

	Page
Address by General Francisco da Costa Gomes, President of the Republic of Portugal	685

President: Mr. Abdelaziz BOUTEFLIKA
(Algeria).

*Address by General Francisco da Costa Gomes,
President of the Republic of Portugal*

1. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the General Assembly I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency General Francisco da Costa Gomes, President of the Republic of Portugal, and I invite him to address the Assembly.

2. General DA COSTA GOMES (President of the Republic of Portugal):* In the name of the Portuguese people I wish to present fraternal greetings to all peoples of the world. In doing so, I realize that I am addressing an august Assembly which, thanks to its vocation to universality, represents the rallying point for the best hopes of those who love justice and peace.

3. I present my greetings to Your Excellencies, Mr. President and distinguished representatives to this General Assembly, bearer of the most exalted responsibilities in the history of mankind.

4. It is universally recognized that, despite its faults, which are inherent in any human endeavour, this Organization has sought to assure an atmosphere of tolerance, peace, security and justice in the world.

5. Men of talent and men of genius have given their best to this Organization and have known how to place the ideals of the good of mankind and of universal equity above national or regional interests. They have thus left their footprints on the rising path which leads to the enhancement of human dignity.

6. I am the first Head of State of Portugal privileged to address world public opinion, availing myself of the advantage of doing so from this rostrum and in the presence of Your Excellencies.

7. My country has behind it eight long centuries of history and we shall not find it difficult to show forbearance in recalling to mind its last half century during which the conduct of our affairs fell to men who did not know how to harmonize their ideals with the collective thinking of the people to which I belong.

8. In the history of all peoples one comes across flashes of inspiration which illuminate the path of their most dynamic forces towards the noblest and most constructive achievements, as, indeed, one also comes across vagaries of political blindness which weaken their will and plunge countries into the slough of barren obscurity.

9. Lofty minds are indeed the minds of those who know how to rise above the transient contingencies of history and achieve a synthetic global vision permitting a critical and proper perspective of the life of a country.

10. I shall not be exaggerating in favour of the Portuguese people if I attribute to them, on balance, a constructive role in the march of history. We have made a decisive contribution to the planetary concept which man has of himself today. We were among the good pioneers whose legislation abolishing slavery became yet another legal landmark. We demonstrate that lack of resources is no hindrance to the promotion of a fruitful intermingling of races making for a deeper realization of brotherly feelings and for a closer union among men: in the vast area embraced by Portuguese-speaking peoples, 130 million souls confirm this assertion. We are a European people whose landscape and art reveal influences derived from all continents and whose bloodstream is marked by genetic traits derived from European clans, from tribes of the whole African continent, from Asia and from the Americas.

11. I am the Head of State of a country which, after suffering the humiliation of a half century of dictatorship, initiated, in the long night of 25 April, a bloodless revolution which outsiders have called the purest that has occurred in this century.

12. We are fully determined to safeguard the purity of the main objectives of that revolution, namely, to restore to the Portuguese people their lost dignity by creating conditions of greater justice through pluralistic democratic institutions, legitimized by the freely expressed will of our people; and to initiate the irreversible and definitive process of decolonization in the Territories under Portuguese administration. We shall not consent any longer to bartering the freedom of our collective conscience for grandiose dreams of sterile imperialism.

13. Our revolution, initiated on 25 April, continues, in spite of hurdles and difficulties, to demonstrate the high civic sense of the people of Portugal.

14. I here extend an invitation to the political leaders present in this Assembly to verify for themselves the fact that in Portugal the general atmosphere of peaceful activity and orderly life does not warrant rash conclusions of an alarmist nature based on minor social disturbances, which the Provisional Government has invariably calmed and overcome.

* General da Costa Gomes spoke in Portuguese. The English version of his statement was supplied by the Delegation.

15. In these circumstances I am in a position to proclaim solemnly that the Portuguese Government intends, and is able, to comply with the Charter of the United Nations, both in the letter and in the spirit, and to fulfil all international obligations, political, commercial or financial, to which it is committed.

16. Domestically, we shall carry out a process of democratization whereby we intend, with a minimum of suffering, to free men's minds of the poisons of half a century of propaganda from the extreme right. We shall create an atmosphere of political tolerance, based on a multiparty system. We shall begin the politicization of our people so that they might choose freely the multiparty system under which they wish to live. During the process of decolonization we shall remain faithful to the principles of international law, self-determination and independence, and in applying those principles retain the flexibility of spirit to safeguard the interests of the people who should be freed from colonialism. We shall be as dynamic as is required by the impatience of those who have taken up a task which has been long delayed, and as patient as is necessary to promote the happiness of the peoples who have suffered the direct effects of the previous political situation in Portugal. We shall know how to avoid stereotyped models and how to find for each Territory the solution best suited to guarantee the happy birth of a new country.

17. In the sphere of international relations we shall intensify our economic and political ties with all the traditionally friendly countries and with all the peoples of the world.

18. We intend to profit by our historical relations with other peoples to bring about as fast as possible just situations of mutual interest embracing the existing Portuguese-speaking countries and the new sister nations formed by the process of decolonization now under way, without forgetting the Arab States and others whose historical paths have intertwined with ours in the course of centuries.

19. Our Latin cultural origins will facilitate a strengthening of the bonds of solidarity with all the Latin countries of Europe and America.

20. The stage of our development, our geographical situation, the sentiment and inborn anti-racism of our people, are guarantees of a relationship of easy understanding and fraternal mutual assistance with all the peoples of the third world.

21. The international community no longer has a right to condemn Portugal or to brand it with the stigma of suspicion or of conditional acceptance.

22. Committed to a revolution in thought, in conduct and in social attitudes, to a peaceful revolution in the scale of values so as to ensure conditions of justice for the poor and unprotected, Portugal feels entitled to the solidarity and assistance of the international community in which it has taken its place.

23. We expect from the United Nations and from its specialized agencies a rapid lifting of all the embargoes and restrictions from which we have been suffering.

24. The pre-democratic situation in which we find ourselves is fraught with burdensome economic and financial difficulties which will be best overcome if

the democratic countries of the world are ready to offer us their material and moral solidarity, rapid and fraternal, and at a just financial and political price. We look forward to this friendly attitude on their part.

25. Concerning international problems, Portugal wishes to express its profound desire to see the great Powers more dynamically engaged in the process of world disarmament, so that the resources that would thus be made available may be channelled to the less favoured countries where the struggle for survival is for each human being a tragedy negating his right to culture and spiritual progress.

26. In their instinctive international humanism, the Portuguese people feel that they are brothers to all the oppressed peoples, and declare their readiness to contribute to all initiatives aimed at eliminating hunger from the world, bringing about a better distribution of wealth and ensuring the implementation of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

27. In less than eight days the United Nations will be celebrating its twenty-ninth anniversary. The voice of the weak has found here a forum when the law of force overwhelmed the force of law. The voice of the oppressed has stigmatized here the ignominy of the oppressors. The piteous cries of the poor have struck here the conscience of those who extravagantly waste their surplus share of available resources. Excited adversaries have aired here their pseudo-reasons, which public opinion has reduced to reasonable dimensions.

28. How often have the tireless efforts of this Organization met with scant success! How frequently have selfishness and pride silenced the voice of justice and reason! But, as a large measure of compensation, how many of the weak have found support, how many of the oppressed have been liberated, how many of the poor have been helped, and how many of the arrogant have suffered just ridicule for their absurd attitudes!

29. The twenty-ninth anniversary opens another chapter in the history of our Organization which will undoubtedly add to the strength of the most transcendental institution created by the mind of man.

30. Our gratitude goes out to all those who, directly or indirectly, have contributed to the genesis and development of the United Nations, and for having given us another great day in the life of mankind.

31. I am about to conclude, because the world expects of us not words but much concrete action. I salute the countries that have been our traditional friends through good times and bad.

32. I salute the countries of Lusian expression, actual and potential, from whom humanity expects a strengthening of fraternal ties of community and of mutual respect.

33. I salute all the Latin peoples, sister countries by culture, from whose spirit of humanism oppressed peoples have the right to expect assistance.

34. I salute the whole third world in the assurance that I shall be understood when I make special mention of the brother peoples of Africa, including the Arab peoples who likewise have left their imprint in the blood and in the soul of the people to which I belong.

35. I salute the African peoples who, in total confidence in the honesty and sincerity of our decolonization process, have established diplomatic relations with Portugal. We are deeply moved by this.

36. I conclude with a greeting to all the good people who aspire to build a better world for mankind—more peaceful, more secure, more brotherly, more progressive.

37. May each new generation of men enjoy a life more worthy to be lived.

38. The PRESIDENT (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the General Assembly I should like to thank the President of the Republic of Portugal for the important speech he has just delivered.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.