

PALCUS 14th Annual Leadership Awards Gala
University of Massachusetts, at Dartmouth, October 23, 2010.

Muito obrigado. Vou exprimir-me em inglês, por consideração pelos que nesta sala não tiveram a oportunidade de aprender a sexta língua materna mais falada no mundo. Dear President of PALCUS, thank you so much for your kind and generous words. My gratitude also for what has been previously said by Senator Marc Pacheco and Mayor Scott Lang – it has really been a privilege to interact with them, in so many different occasions, in the last four years. As it is a privilege and a real pleasure to be present – for the third time now – in a PALCUS Gala Dinner and Awards Program, and to be given once again the opportunity to address you all.

These warm feelings are surely enhanced by the “spirit of place” (o “espírito do lugar”), these ceremonies happening in the very special campus of the University of Massachusetts, at Dartmouth, which I have so often visited and whose critically intensive and extensive labor in benefit of the Portuguese Language and Culture crossed at different occasions with my own activities and responsibilities as Ambassador of Portugal to the USA. I especially remember, just to name a few of these occasions, the visit here of the President of the Portuguese Republic in 2007, following the opening of the “Encompassing the Globe” exhibition in D.C. and shortly before the start of our successful third Presidency of the European Union; the inaugural ceremonies of the Ferreira Mendes Portuguese-American Archives, a moving and revelatory memorial of the Portuguese presence in this country and a perennial testimony of the capacity of the Portuguese-American Community of this Commonwealth to conceive initiatives and to congregate the necessary efforts – both here and in Portugal – to make them happen; the launching of new translations of Camões and Vieira, together with a book on the Brazilian Baroque, at the Library of Congress, in Washington, with the presence of Congressman Barney Frank; and - even if being, I concede, a little less spiritual in its deepest sense - the several lunches I attended at the University's social headquarters in Boston, graciously hosted by Chancellor Jean McCormack.

Another word of thanks, then, to the Provost, to Prof. Frank Sousa, to the team of the Center of Portuguese Studies, and to the Department of Portuguese at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, for their hospitality and above all for their work. But being in Massachusetts and next to Rhode Island, I not only feel tempted to evoke the “spirit of place” I have mentioned before, but also dare to expand the “place of this spirit” (as if zooming down a “Google” map) for, defined within the range of a few miles, a relatively small portion of territory hosts the most impressive concentration of institutions, outside Portugal, devoted to the expansion of the Portuguese Language and Culture and to the development of scientific and technological links with my country. I mean of course the prestigious Center of Portuguese Studies at the Brown University, shaped by the intellectual leadership of Prof. Onésimo de Almeida, but also the Roger Williams University, which I had the opportunity to visit today, the Bristol Community College, the Rhode Island College, the University of Massachusetts, Boston, the Boston College, the wide network of public schools and community schools that offer Portuguese

Language programs and, in the area of Science and Technology, the MIT/Portugal and the Harvard/Portugal Programs. We can feel here the realized promise that the special rank the Portuguese language has reached in this region – where, differently from what occurs in the rest of the United States, it is the second most spoken language – will be continued.

Allow me three more brief remarks about Portuguese studies since, quite appropriately I think, they finally became the starting point of this address. First, to tell you that the transfer of the former Coordinator responsible for the East Coast to our Embassy in Washington and her upgrading to the role of Coordinator of the Portuguese Language Program for the whole United States, supported by two deputies in each coast, is inserted in a set of coherent reform measures destined to better structure the institutional support of the Instituto Camões in the area of its enlarged responsibilities as far as the tuition of Portuguese abroad is concerned. This renewed approach started to bear fruit, namely in Massachusetts, with the creation of new centers of Portuguese studies at the University of Massachusetts, Boston and at the Boston College, supported, through that Institute, by the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Negotiations are underway in Florida, Rhode Island, New Jersey and New York aiming at the approval of Memoranda of Understanding with the respective education authorities, somehow replicating the pioneering example set - in this as in many other different areas relevant to the Community and to the Portuguese-American relations, namely in connection with the Azores and the Azorean regional authorities - by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Second, to praise and thank Dr. Rui Machete, the deserving recipient of the PALCUS lifetime achievement award, for the continued attention and concrete support he devoted to the cause of the Portuguese studies in the USA. And third, to challenge the young Portuguese-American generations to learn Portuguese, not only as a gesture of respect for their grandparents' heritage, as a commitment on a project of personal enrichment or as a means to accede to the vast and ever expanding cultural offer of the Lusophone world, but also as a tool that, by conferring comparative advantages and by opening new professional opportunities, brings about a potential economic added value.

I have mentioned Dr. Rui Machete, but allow me also to extend my congratulations to all the tonight's distinguished awardees, namely the President of the Regional Government of the Azores, Dr. Carlos César – and asking Dr. André Bradford to convey to him my best personal regards - and the Honorable Teresa Paiva Weed, President of the Rhode Island Senate, who I had the privilege of having met in different occasions at the Providence State House.

Portugal, as we are all aware of, is going through a severe budgetary adjustment process and is facing very serious challenges at this juncture of a still unresolved global crisis. I certainly have no intention to overshadow this complex reality, but it would also be absurd not to stress, on the positive side, two major developments occurring in the Portuguese foreign policy front:

- Our election last week to the Security Council of the United Nations, at the end of a rather competitive race, an outcome we can be very proud of, that boosts international prestige and influence, that represents an unequivocal sign of trust and recognition by the international community of our diplomatic capacity to build bridges and constructive consensus in world affairs and that offers new ways to reinforce our contacts and cooperation with the United States of America;

- The three back to back summits that will take place in Lisbon next November – I mean the NATO Summit, which was the starting point, then the European Union/USA Summit, and now also the NATO/Russia Council at the level of Heads of State and Government – where the presence of President Obama is expected; these very important events will obviously strengthen the visibility of Portugal in the world stage and reinforce the already valued “Lisbon brand” in the international affairs market.

As you may imagine, being an Ambassador in Washington for four years implies broad and dense agendas, intensive contacts and the guarantee to bring home a vast legacy of diversified and enriching experiences. But what I would above all, and very simply, like to convey to you tonight is that the numerous encounters I had with the Portuguese and Portuguese-American communities throughout the United States have been extremely rewarding and, at the end of the day, will undoubtedly stay on the top of the best memories that will accompany me as I leave the United States.

Among them, I naturally include the "First Meeting of American Legislators and Mayors of Portuguese Descent" that the Embassy has organized a year ago in Washington, where a number among you have been present. This is an initiative to be continued, although this year, with the mid-term elections in November, it proved too difficult to have it properly organized. Anyway, I personally think we should avoid the temptation to turn it into an obligatory annual event, to prevent sacrificing substance to schedule compliance – and you might remember how clearly I stressed, at the very opening of last year's event, that our intention while launching this initiative was not merely social nor celebratory. I also think, whatever the format it will evolve to, that there is a clear advantage in keeping a focus on the subject of political participation (based primarily in the Community's experiences and successes, but not forgetting the work developed in this area by the Portuguese-American Citizenship Project) as well as the strong academic and economic dimensions we have conferred to its first edition (and you know how much attention I have paid to the economic dimension of the Portuguese-American relations, this speech being finally the only one I have pronounced in the last years without mentioning, for instance, the Portuguese investments in this country). Depending on still unpredictable developments, thought should be given to the opportunity and convenience of organizing the Second Meeting back to back with the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of PALCUS, which will take place in D.C.

From New Jersey to Florida, from Massachusetts to Pennsylvania, from Rhode Island to New York, from Connecticut to Virginia and finally California – to which I paid an unforgettable official visit last June and where I had the opportunity to meet extensively the Portuguese communities, starting in San Francisco, San Jose and Sacramento, going

down the Central Valley and finishing in San Diego, to where we have this year delocalized the Embassy's official celebration of our National Day, aboard the tall ship Sagres – in all these States, I repeat, I only heard words of praise and respect for the Portuguese and Portuguese-American communities, for their work, for their values, for their insertion in local societies, as well as for their visibly positive contribution to the economic and social fabric of these States. There is an obvious advantage for these Communities to get organized and to be growingly acknowledged at the national level. This, especially, in a country where integration does not mean dilution in a single mould; where ethnic diversity, strong and widely present in the very build up of the USA, is not only accepted, but recognized and even encouraged; where the feelings of double belongingness (“dupla pertença”) are common; where it is considered normal and expected that these communities act as advocates and relevant actors, at the civil society level, in the relations between the USA and their countries of origin; where nationalities gather around their original identities and defend their specific interests; where the lobbying activity is a current and permanent feature of the functioning and shaping of the public space.

I can see here a vast space of possibilities and opportunities to be assumed by PALCUS; and I am confident that in the future, once the recent difficulties it went through are overcome, PALCUS and its Board of Directors, under the guidance of Fernando Rosa, will renew with its original purpose and further engage its energies and leadership in advancing the cause of the Portuguese and Portuguese-American communities in this country. I wish them all the best for their future endeavours and for the fulfilment of these noble objectives.

Thank you very much for your attention, patience and friendship (muito obrigado pela vossa atenção, paciência e amizade).