

Speech friendship group European parliament – Cape Verde

Maria da Graça Carvalho

08-06-2010

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to welcome all of you and to thank you for having accepted this invitation to participate in our effort to organise this Group of Friends of Cape Verde.

- Cape Verde is a country of ten small islands making part of the Macaronesia, a group of archipelagos, with Madeira and Azores from Portugal and Canarias from Spain. Cape Verde has common boundaries with the European Union, having a very special geographic position and excellent cultural and economic relationships with Europe.
- Cape Verde has all specificities related to insularity, remoteness, isolation and total dependence from imports. These insular characteristics, highlighted in the International Strategy of Murices and Barbados plan of action, are important constraints for the development of island states and outermost regions

(RUPs). Personally, I have worked for these constraints to be taken in account in the Cotonou agreements and FED programs.

- Cape Verde has struggled for development handicapped by its poor natural resources and very arid environmental conditions. The country has been the target of important international development aid, and has done an excellent use of these resources thanks to good governance and a stable and democratic political regime. In 2007, Cape Verde was promoted to the group of "medium development" countries and the 9th best ranked country in Africa in terms of Human Development Index.
- As a result of its social and political conditions and its strategic position to Europe, Cape Verde benefits from a special partnership with the European Union, a unique case in the ACP countries. The country is playing an important role in the work with ACP, especially for the small island states and RUPs. Recently, Cape Verde was appointed, together with the Canary Islands, to co-chair the special group ACP-RUPs.

Cape Verde islands are in fact the south-western Atlantic frontier of Europe, having deep historical, social, political and cultural affinities

with Europe. Thus, the creation of a Group of Friends of Cape Verde will give the opportunity to have a good platform for improving the relationship between Europe and Africa, reinforcing the links between these two regions.

I had the opportunity to discuss this idea at the end of last year, with former cape Verdean ambassador in Brussels as well as with the minister for foreign affairs of Cape Verde. Former Portuguese member of European parliament, José Ribeiro e Castro has initiated work towards this objective and contributed to the signature of the special partnership with Cape Verde. This work is actually been continued by the Portuguese MEP Diogo Feio.

The Group of Friends of Cape Verde will serve, among other:

- To disseminate cape Verdean political, social, cultural and economic reality and its privileged relationship with Europe, Africa and America.
- Also, the group is aimed at supporting Cape Verde in the implementation of the special partnership with the EU, namely with respect to cooperation, education, science and technology,

research and innovation, marine sciences, biodiversity, security, illegal immigration, and neighbourhood policy.

- In some way, Europe has neglected its Atlantic frontiers. The creation of an Atlantic euro-African region could give us the opportunity to strengthen the relationships between European south-western coast, the outermost regions and the neighbour ACP countries, such as Cape Verde. This initiative could contribute to improve the cooperation in areas such as transport, energy security, scientific exchange, tourism development, security and the fight against illegal immigration.

In practical terms, I would like to suggest that an informal sub group could work together in order to explore the following possibilities:

- to create a strategy for the region of Macaronesia, following the example of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region;
- to implement a large-scale research programme for the region of Macaronesia, as BONUS programme for the Baltic Sea, aiming at developing and broadening the Baltic Sea research funding cooperation.

- to launch an initiative for enhanced cooperation mechanisms, such as the south-east energy community, the eastern partnership and BAKU Initiative, in the context of the European Neighbourhood policy.

The Group of Friends of Cape Verde will be an opportunity to accomplish these purposes and go further on the cooperation between the European Union and the south Atlantic region.