

**SPEECH BY THE
MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

ON

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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MINISTÉRIO DA CIÊNCIA E DO ENSINO SUPERIOR

Gabinete da Ministra

International co-operation in Science and Technology

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here today and to have the opportunity to address such a prestigious audience on the importance of international co-operation in science and technology.

Current global concerns, problems and challenges require strong and efficient partnerships in order to achieve sustainable social and economic development for all societies and nations of the planet. The needed concerted and integrated efforts should always have in mind the diversity and variety of cultures and national or regional interests. In this respect, by giving the opportunity to tackle global challenges, international co-operation in Science and Technology is one of the most important tool to achieve sustainable development worldwide. Science has a common universal language.

The Declarations we are asked to endorse deal with relevant issues but, obviously, do not cover all the areas of interest that we must take into account. As a consequence, I would like to emphasise the importance of Biotechnology for sustainable growth and development, as highlighted in the document we received. Strategic areas such as health, environment, agriculture, clean and affordable energy and industrial production can also benefit from research and innovation.

Nevertheless, the relevant issues important to international co-operation are broader and, thus international co-operation for sustainable development should not be restricted to the points of the Declaration, or indeed to the areas of Biotechnology, or High Energy Physics or Neuroinformatics.



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On this point, I would like to go further and to emphasise the issue of Information Society and to draw the attention of colleagues to the recent Geneva World Summit on Information Society. The importance of fighting the digital divide is a key point in international co-operation, taking into account the diversity and specificities of the countries and regions. Another important concept came up: the recognition of the principle of digital solidarity. These are new frontiers that can contribute to boosting world economic growth.

I would also like to emphasise the link between absolute poverty and infectious diseases, such as Malaria, HIV and Tuberculosis, and to call for further investment and cooperation in this respect.

Similarly, international cooperation in the fields of environment, energy and water is essential and vital for the preservation of our planet and our common natural resources. Special effort should be placed on the climate change issues.

Further areas of relevance are human resource development and mobility, and capacity building, including institutional capacity building in developing countries; and infrastructures such as in the area of transport, energy and ITC. Coming back to the digital divide, ITC is fundamental in connecting communities and networking.

We should promote research projects in critical and structural areas, areas of primary interest for our societies based in the principles of sustainable development and the needs for social inclusion and better quality of life for all. Science has a human and social dimension of vital importance.

Development should actually be at the core of our concerns. This is a mission of the OECD. The concept of sustainable development, as we all know, is broad and intimately connected to the welfare of nations: environment,



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employment, economic reforms, social cohesion. Science and technological innovation is becoming more and more important to generating investments towards growth and employment in sectors such as energy, transports, industry, Information Society, environment. In short, international co-operation in science and technology brings a greater quality of life for all the current and future generations.

The exchange of information and experience is fundamental in this area (policies in the area of science and technology, funding schemes and national programmes, national strategies for sustainable development). We should also have proper, updated, evolving and dynamic data on this. This is the reason why I agree on promoting better access to research data.

Finally I would like to add another topic to this important discussion: the issue of safety and security. Safety and security is also critical to a more effective and peaceful development and becoming of outmost importance for cooperation in science and technology. The response to risks of all kinds is a global concern and solutions must be found also at a global level.

Beyond its industrial potential, research in the area of security assumes a growing importance in the political agenda. International cooperation in science and technology could address the following issues:

- Development of more rigorous schemes of vigilance and preparation to face risk situations;
- Tackling the issues related to the consequences of climate change;
- Fighting against droughts, floods and other natural disasters;
- Protecting human life and natural ecosystems, preserving biodiversity;
- Optimizing security and protection of network systems;
- The overall aspect of information and communication security;
- Protection against terrorism, including bio-terrorism;



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- Co-ordination in the prevention and management of crisis and emergency situations.

The OECD Futures programme, namely in the area of Emerging risks in the XXI century, is a clear and fine example of the international character of the problem in need of a response from the scientific and technological point of view: areas such as food safety, industrial accidents, infectious diseases, terrorism, cyber-security, space and transport and last but not least natural disasters (wild fires, droughts, floods, earthquakes, among other).

Without neglecting the importance of the aforementioned topics, we believe that science and knowledge are the basis for a safe, secure and democratic society. Scientific international cooperation with developing countries, with special emphasis for Least Developed Countries, is of outmost importance to create a stable and peaceful international framework to lay the groundwork for our common future. In this context, Portugal, besides the international scientific cooperation within the European Union and with the United States of America, gives a great priority to initiatives which may be of interest to Portuguese speaking countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This priority also makes the different programmes of OECD of extreme value to my country.

I thank you very much for your attention.