



Declaration of Mr. Barroso on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe

Today we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. This is a matter of particular satisfaction for me as I have been following the work of the Centre since its creation : first as Secretary of State for Co-operation of Portugal at the time of its installation in Lisbon, then as Prime Minister of Portugal and finally as President of the European Commission.

I would like to underline the important work of this Council of Europe's structure in promoting dialogue between Europe and its neighbouring countries at the level of education, youth and intercultural dialogue. The European Commission has given support to its projects aiming at developing global education in the new member States of the European Union as well as euro-african youth cooperation. The "Lisbon Forum", chaired by Jorge Sampaio, High Representative of the United Nations for the Alliance of Civilizations, represents one of the Centre's most important instruments for stimulating exchanges and dialogue between different continents in the field of human rights.

The topic of this year's Forum "Creating a culture of human rights through education" is of particular importance for the European Commission: human rights can never be taken for granted. All governments, institutions, associations and citizens are concerned and need to be reminded of the necessity to promote and protect human rights. We cannot ensure universal respect for human rights without international co-operation. That is why the "quadrilogue" structure of the North-South Centre is so important, and this is why its role as a "bridge builder" between different actors, geographical spaces and cultures deserves our support."