



# North-South Centre of the Council of Europe



## **2010 North-South Prize Ceremony** **Mrs Deborah Bergamini** **Chair of the Executive Council of the North-South Centre**

Mr President of the Portuguese Republic,  
Mr President of the Portuguese Parliament,  
Honourable Members of the Portuguese Parliament,  
Mr Secretary General of the Council of Europe,  
Mr President of the Parliamentary Assembly,  
Distinguished Prize Winners,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, on behalf of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, I wish to express our gratitude to the Portuguese Parliament for its hospitality, and to the Portuguese authorities for their continuous support to the Centre. I have indeed a renewed feeling of pride and honour when addressing each year, at this special event, such a distinguished audience in such a beautiful historical setting. I would like more particularly to thank both the President of the Portuguese Republic, Mr Aníbal Cavaco Silva, and the President of the Portuguese Parliament, Mr Jaime Gama, for their continuous support and encouragement to the North-South Prize and to the work of the North-South Centre.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since 1995, the Council of Europe recognises, through its North-South Prize, the work of women and men who have stood out for their remarkable contribution for promoting North-South solidarity in our world; women and men that strive for just societies and a peaceful world by promoting worldwide the core values of the Council of Europe.

As you all know, last year the North-South Centre celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. 20 years of work dedicated to foster international solidarity and global interdependence with great accomplishments when it comes to giving a European dimension to multilateral co-operation and strengthening the ties with civil society, with a focus on youth policies.

The role of interface between Europe and the South, which was at the origin of the Centre's creation, is today more important than ever. Indeed, we are living in a radically changing international environment, and we are facing impressive changes in North Africa and the Middle East. The impact of these changes goes well beyond those regions, and has a direct influence on our own multicultural societies.

Our commitment to universal values, which was sometimes denied by *regimes*, has regained full legitimacy through the voice of the *people*, women and youth ahead. The North-South Centre capacity of acting in different dimensions and mobilizing all relevant actors, together with its expertise in the fields of global education, youth co-operation and intercultural dialogue, are powerful added values on which we can build for a new era of trust and cooperation between Europe and its Southern neighbours. We are proud to act as bridge-builders in the name of democracy, in the name of the Council of Europe. Today more than ever. We are proud to contribute to the shaping of a true European Mediterranean policy based on human rights.

As far as the Centre is concerned, the developments that have occurred over the past three years bear witness to its growing relevance : five new countries – including two non-Europeans countries, Morocco and Cape Verde – have joined, my own country (Italy) returned, and the cooperation with the European Union has been fully renewed and is today stronger than ever. Furthermore, the Centre has developed privileged co-operation links with the United Nations and actively contributes to the Alliance of Civilisations' regional strategies being implemented in the Balkans and in the Mediterranean.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2011 is a decisive year in the life of the North-South Centre. The future of the institution lies with the adoption of a new statutory resolution, as proposed by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe following an initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly. I am very happy that the process has now reached its final stage, as the new Resolution will be adopted in the coming weeks by the Committee of Ministers. This will certainly give to the Centre increased political momentum and the administrative and financial stability that it needs to carry out its mission at the best.

Today, as we stand at the crossroads, I look forward with optimism. We will continue on our journey of bringing the North and South closer together, taking inspiration from the paths followed by our two prize winners being honoured today, as living examples that, in all circumstances and throughout history, individual men and women, side by side with institutions, have been able to foster overall progress in the benefit of humanity as a whole.

I thank you for your attention.