



**ADDRESS BY MR MEVLÜT ÇAVUŞOĞLU,  
PRESIDENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE XVI AWARD CEREMONY  
OF THE NORTH-SOUTH PRIZE**

(Lisbon, Portugal, 29 March 2011, 11h-30-12h30)

Dear friends

The action of our two prize-winners is so widely known and admired across the world that, in theory, they hardly need yet another prize to acknowledge their talent and their achievements.

But the North-South Prize has a special meaning, which goes beyond being a simple reward. It is a symbol and a cause.

First of all, it is a symbol of the one world in which we are all living. A world in which the North and the South, the East and the West, should be nothing more than geographical references. Unfortunately, in people's minds, they also represent different political realities. They symbolise seemingly different worlds inhabited by seemingly different people, some of which enjoy prosperity and human rights, and others do not.

The Council of Europe played a huge role in bridging the East-West divide in Europe following the fall of the Berlin wall. We are now facing a new important challenge with the ongoing revolutions in the Arab world: not only because these are our closest neighbours with whom we share geographical, cultural, spiritual and historic references, but also with who we need to tackle together the greatest issues of our modern times: economic crisis, migration flows, confrontation between communities and nations, international terrorism and organised crime, climate change.

Will the current events in the Arab world bring us closer to bridging also the North-South divide? It is high time to do this, but we must be up to the challenge. We need to support with our expertise the democratic movements, but also to find an appropriate response to the action of

tyrants who cling on to power through violence and total disregard for basic human rights principles.

The Parliamentary Assembly is actively involved in bringing non-member states of the Council of Europe closer to our standards through a newly created status of partner for democracy. Morocco and Palestine have already made requests which are currently under examination. We are also maintaining close contacts with the new authorities of Tunisia where our Presidential Committee will make a visit shortly.

But values, conventions and legal instruments would be senseless if they were not carried out by people. The world moves forward thanks to the power of the masses and thanks to the strength, courage and vision of exceptional individuals. We are greatly honoured to have two such individuals with us today.

Mrs Arbour, out of your very impressive CV I wish to dwell on two of your functions which have a special meaning for the Parliamentary Assembly that I have the honour to chair. These were also the two functions in which you addressed the Assembly, once in 1999 and once in 2007.

As a Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia you assisted a process which is vital for the peace and reconciliation in the Balkans and Europe as a whole. This process is not finished yet and I bear a fresh witness of this, as I have just come back from official visits in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Serbia. But thanks to the action of the Tribunal one essential idea has now, hopefully, been entrenched in the collective mind and it is that one cannot build a future based on peace and justice if one does not bring justice to the past.

Mrs Arbour, you also attended one of the Assembly major annual debates on state of democracy and human rights in Europe in 2007 in your capacity of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. When referring to the achievements and challenges in Europe in this respect, you said that the issues related to the fight against terrorism and expanding migration flows, as well as persistent racist, xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes and practices, lead the range of human rights concerns that should dominate Europe's agenda. These words remain as relevant as ever and will remain at the heart of the Council of Europe's action.

President Lula, your name will forever remain the symbol of the rise of a nation, which is now amongst the most powerful in the world. Through your political action you have demonstrated one of the most essential principles that the Council of Europe has been defending and promoting. No long-lasting stability and economic prosperity are possible if they are not put on the solid foundations of democracy, human rights and in particular the eradication of social discrepancies and injustices.

I wish to also praise your commitment in favour of dialogue and understanding amongst cultures and religions, which found its culmination last year in the hosting of the World Forum of the Alliance of the Civilisations. This is an issue to which I am also deeply attached and, in two weeks in Strasbourg the Parliamentary Assembly will hold a major debate on the religious dimension of inter-cultural dialogue, with the participation of religious leaders representing all the major faiths on the European continent.

Dear friends, I said at the beginning that the North-South Prize is a symbol, but also a cause. A noble cause which aims at bridging gaps and uniting people across the globe around their most fundamental and cherished freedoms and rights. We hope that you, Mrs Arbour and President Lula, will join us in this cause with your political experience and huge moral authority. Thank you very much for accepting to be together with us.