

SPEECH BY H.E. VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLEIA DA REPÚBLICA,

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II High-level Interparliamentary Conference on Migration and Asylum in Europe | Session 1: The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on migration and asylum policies

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Thank you, Tomas Tobé, dear colleague. Good morning to you and to all other distinguished participants in this first session of our meeting.

Let me very briefly just emphasize the obvious. COVID-19 pandemics has added severe complexity to the extremely problematic file of adequate policies for migration fluxes.

On one side, the fragility of people on the move, escaping from conflicts, poverty or persecution, exposes those persons to an added danger of contagion and to the emergence of disease outbreaks.

On the other side, the dramatic impacts of COVID on economic dynamics deepen inequalities both at the global and at the regional and national levels. The asymmetries between the global North and the global South, as well as the gap between the richest and the poorest segments of our societies have been boosted in terms of resilience and in terms of capacity of responding to the destructive results of pandemics. COVID is having a direct effect in increasing poverty, in reducing job opportunities for the less qualified majority and in challenging the scope of welfare policies.

This is an obvious major challenge to Europe. If we want to stay loyal to the primacy of human rights and social cohesion, then we clearly must assume that this is not the time to build walls against those that search for safety and protection in Europe. Improving safe routes for migrants and refugees, reinforcing inclusion policies, enlarging concrete solidarity with African, Latin American and Southern Asian countries should be at the heart of the EU's approach to the complexity of migration policies in times of pandemics.

Let me remind Pope Francis' crystal-clear words in Fratelli Tutti: "no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together". I am convinced that this session will give all of us clues to put this strong message into concrete policies.

Thank you very much,

José Manuel Pureza

