

**Intervenção do
Subsecretário Regional dos Assuntos Europeus e Cooperação Externa**

**Colóquio Internacional
“Regionalismo e Organização da Política: a Europa, os Estados Unidos e a
Relação Transatlântica”**

Universidade dos Açores
7 de Janeiro de 2011

Allow me, at the ending of this Seminar and on behalf of the President of the Government of the Azores, some very brief word, first of all, to express our satisfaction to have supported and hosted, in our Region, this debate on Europe, the United States and the Transatlantic Relationship.

These two days of fruitful presentations, discussions and exchanges, by such distinct participants are a first and clear sign of the success, not only of this seminar, but also for the work that will follow regarding the future academic studies on these topics. I would like, thus, to address our congratulations and best wishes to the University of the Azores, in particular, to the Jean Monet Chair, for this initiative.

Allow me also to share with you some aspects of the external political action of the Azores Government, which, in our view, clearly demonstrates our commitment to this transatlantic relation and the development and reinforcement of the Atlantic Community.

It has been discussed here the importance of our geostrategic position, since the XV century to present times, for maritime and aerial navigation, from cable to satellite communications and technologies, to military and scientific cooperation, as well as the role of our important and considerable communities of immigrants. In all these domains the central geographical position of the Azores in the Atlantic remains crucial to any analysis.

But, nevertheless - and from another point of view -, it is our peripheral (better said ultra-peripheral) condition regarding mainland Portugal and Europe that supports and justifies our dual special status: of a Portuguese Autonomous Region and of an European Outermost Region.

These two fundamental conditions allow us to have our own external cooperation and European policy, having established political agreements and common projects, not only with European regions, but also with American States such as Massachusetts, Rhode Island or California, supporting our communities, the Portuguese language and the Azorean traditions.

In Europe, it is a fact that we have always strengthened the importance of the transatlantic relation and the role that the Azores play in this field.

For instance, in the context of the Assembly of European Regions – an organization gathering more than 270 regions in Europe to look after their interests in the EU – the Azores hold the Presidency of the Eurodissey Program, a youth exchange project where, for the first time, due to

our special political bounds with North America, we have ensured the participation of Quebec, in Canada, allowing young workers to have training periods in both sides of the Atlantic.

On another example, in the Conference of Maritime and Peripheral Regions of Europe, the Azores were elected for the presidency of the Islands Commission, that covers twenty four European regional island authorities and a 13.5 million population of these insular territories, which are the borders of Europe and – as we always remind the European Institutions - bridges to other continents.

And we could also give as examples, the common political positions of the Outermost Regions of Europe on European subjects such as external relations and cooperation, maritime policy or the European integrated policy for the Atlantic space, where we always try to transmit and defend the importance of this space and the assets that we – Açores, Islands and Outermost Region - bring to Europe.

One final example, that shows clearly that international relations and diplomacy are, today, a complex network where not only States can act, but also Regions: - In last December, the Regional Governments of Azores, Madeira and Canary Islands and the national governments of Cape Vert, Portugal and Spain signed an agreement establishing the Summit of Macaronesia Islands, an innovative space of multilateral and multilevel cooperation that will grant a bigger visibility, proximity and common political action to the Atlantic islands and communities, joined not only by

geographical insertion, common history or affective links, but, above all, by the global challenges of modern days.

I've just ended a special year of celebrations following the nomination, in 2010, in the context of the Council of Europe, of the Azores as the European Region of the Year. The framework of this award was "Açores: where Europe reaches further".

In the context of this Seminar I would like to end by saying that, with the Azores, Europe reaches so far as North America. The Atlantic is, in fact, smaller when we think on the importance and roll of the Azores and, in this context, Europe and America are closer in their transatlantic relation.

Having said that, and although this is the closing session of this Seminar, I must, nevertheless, wish you the best results for this afternoon's meetings which, I am sure, are an important sign that the work developed so far will have concrete and valuable outcomes.

More than the good memories that we wish you will have from you stay amongst us – despite the bad weather -, I am persuaded that you – as we – view this Seminar as a step towards the deepening of the transatlantic relation that we have and will continue to cherish and nourish.

I wish you all a safe return home and we hope to have you back in our islands in a near future.

Rodrigo Oliveira

Subsecretário Regional dos Assuntos Europeus e Cooperação Externa
Governo da Região Autónoma dos Açores