



**Citation by the Board of Directors of the Society
for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen
to the Secretary-General of the United Nations
António Guterres**

I.

Globalisation exemplifies just how intensely we are all networked with each other and dependent on each other on an international scale – and just how important it is that we uphold ethical principles. At the latest, the refugee crisis made it very clear that politics in Europe are no longer divorced from the conflicts and wars in the Middle East. Global climate change dramatically underlines the need for economic growth to be reconciled with the well-being of humans and their environment. And, in addition to these global ecological, economic and social issues, the fight for more fairness and against hunger and poverty in our world also represents a major challenge facing our industrialised, civilisational society.

Europe has set itself the task of protecting and promoting its values and interests in its relations with its continental neighbours, of contributing to peace, security and sustainable global development, of preserving solidarity and mutual respect between nations, of contributing to free and fair trade, the eradication of poverty and the protection of human beings, and of upholding the principles of the United Nations Charter.

These aims – aligned towards the achievement of a peaceful, multilateral and solidly united world – reflect a model of society advocated by the two greatest peace projects of our times, the European Union and the United Nations. It is a model of society that is just as opposed to unilateralism, to egoism and to isolationism as it is to state control that threatens freedom, to nationalism and to populism.

Since the beginning of 2017, for the first time in over 30 years, definitive responsibility for the work of the United Nations rests in the hands of a European, the former Prime Minister of Portugal António Guterres. Guterres now acts, on the basis of the common values and convictions formulated for itself by the European Union, in the complex global world to promote pluralism, tolerance, dialogue, and most of all peace, liberty and democracy.

Such an endeavour must expect to encounter setbacks.

The Board of Directors of the Society for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen wish to provide encouragement to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres, for such a significant commitment and are honoured to present him with the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen 2019 in recognition of his dedication to a revitalisation and consolidation of multilateral cooperation based on the values and objectives of the European Union and the United Nations.

"All that we strive for as a human family — dignity, hope, progress and prosperity — depends on peace. But peace depends on us," said Guterres on 1 January 2017, at the start of his term of office at the UN. He called for solidarity and empathy in daily life, dialogue and respect across political divides.

Guterres already emphasised in his application for the post of UN Secretary-General that calling out and stamping out "political populism, racism, xenophobia and extremism" had always been his lifelong goal. He met – surprisingly swiftly in the opinion of many commentators – with the approval of the Security Council and the UN General Assembly. According to observers, it may well have been of considerable advantage – considering the North-South tensions plaguing the community of nations – that the Portuguese candidate, like no other, had profound knowledge of the world's trouble spots and was very well acquainted with the needs of poorer countries and developing nations.

II.

António Guterres was born on 30 April 1949 in Santos-o-Velho, Lisbon. He graduated from his studies in Physics and Electrical Engineering at the Instituto Superior Técnico in the Portuguese capital at the age of 22 with an engineering diploma.

Following the Carnation Revolution in 1974, he joined Mário Soares' Socialist Party (PS), which played a major role in the democratisation of Portugal, and headed the Office of the Secretary of State of Industry in 1974 and 1975. In 1976, he gained a seat in the Lisbon Parliament. From 1981 to 1983 he also sat on the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, where he was intensively involved in issues of migration and refugee policy. At the end of the 1980s, he assumed the leadership of the parliamentary group of the PS, and in 1992 as Secretary-General he became the leader of the Portuguese Socialist Party.

Three years later, in October 1995, after the PS had gained 112 of the 230 seats in the Portuguese parliament, Guterres advanced to the position of Prime Minister and formed a minority government – which turned out to be stable. Subsequently, Portugal set course for the European Monetary Union and was one of the eleven EU Member States that introduced the Euro on 1 January 1999.

Although, in the 1999 parliamentary election, the PS once more failed by a hair's breadth to gain the absolute majority, Guterres was re-appointed as the head of government. In the first half of 2000, Prime Minister Guterres – sometimes characterised by the media as a "pragmatic utopian" – used Portugal's stint in the rotating presidency of the European Council to accelerate the debate on a new treaty basis for the EU. He ranks as one of the masterminds of the so-called "Lisbon process", which aimed to make the Union the world's leading knowledge-based economy. His goal was clear: more Europe. "More Europe in economic and social policies [...] More Europe in foreign policy and in common security and defence policy [...] More Europe in the area of freedom, security and justice [...] More competence and responsibility on the European level – even if with a subsidiarity concept – that [...] permits a more comprehensive involvement of the national Member States and a greater degree of diversification, in order to maintain the diversity in Europe, particularly in the cultural sphere."

Highly respected on the European level, at home Guterres accepted the consequences a defeat of the PS in local elections at the end of 2001. He resigned from his posts as party leader and as head of government, and, after early elections in the spring of 2002, was replaced by the new Prime Minister, Manuel Barroso. Internationally, Guterres – who had already attempted to mediate in the conflicts in East Timor and Angola – continued to be a sought-after advisor and, as President of Socialist International (1999-2005), a man of great influence.

It therefore came as no surprise when, following a proposal by the UN Secretary-General at that time, Kofi Annan, this "well-connected popular figure" (DW, 21.7.2005), was appointed to the position of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with effect from 15 June 2005.

III.

As the "guardian" of the Geneva Refugee Convention, Guterres was from now on responsible for the protection of refugees and for the primary task of ensuring that the human rights and human dignity of those seeking protection were respected. This included ensuring compliance with the Convention's "Refoulement" Article (on prohibition of expulsion or return), according to which none of the states who signed the Convention "shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion".

In the meantime, there are numerous countries – especially those bordering directly on trouble spots – that are completely unable to provide for a large number of refugees from their own resources, or to protect them and to conduct fair asylum procedures. As a result, the staff of the UNHCR certainly do not "only" work on ensuring that international agreements for the benefit of refugees are widely propagated and are respected by governments. In particular, the Commission also eases the pressure on the host countries with respect to humanitarian immediate assistance. For many of those seeking refuge, the refugee camps of the UNHCR are their first safe stop where they receive food, clean water, safe shelter and initial medical treatment.

The nature of the Herculean task with which the High Commissioner for Refugees is confronted, and the nature of what Guterres himself calls a "paradigm shift [...] an era in which the magnitude of the phenomenon of forced displacement, as well as the necessary response, are clearly beyond any values and necessities ever recorded in this respect", can best be grasped in terms of the bare figures. During his ten years in office, the number of refugees rose dramatically from around 38 million in 2005 to over 60 million souls in 2015.

At the UNHCR, Guterres introduced structural and organisational reforms and tripled the Commission's volume of activity. At the same time he stepped up the political pressure, arguing that – above and beyond immediate efforts to deal with the refugee crisis in Europe – worldwide developments "require us to reflect seriously about the future. [...] Much more must be done to prevent conflicts and stop the ongoing wars that are driving so many from their homes. The countries neighbouring war zones, which shelter nine in ten refugees worldwide, must be supported more strongly, along with the funding required."

IV.

The choice of the European Guterres as UN Secretary-General also signals a commitment by the world community to redouble its efforts in meeting the major challenge of providing people fleeing from civil war, famine and destitution with a perspective, while at the same time effectively combating the root causes of migration in the countries of origin and achieving overall regulation of worldwide migration.

These are also the objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact for Refugees, both of which were negotiated in the early days of Guterres' term and have been agreed on by the vast majority of UN Member States.

The Compact for Refugees has four main objectives: to ease the pressure on host countries; to increase refugees' self-reliance; to expand access to third-country solutions; and to support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

The Compact for Migration represents a first agreement based on intergovernmental negotiations under the umbrella of the United Nations which covers the whole range of aspects of global migration management and, most importantly, acknowledges that migration flows can no longer be controlled on a national level alone, but can only be responded to on a global level.

"More action and more ambition," Guterres demands from the community of nations – not just in terms of refugee and migration policies but also with regard to meeting "the greatest challenge of our times": climate change.

"The world risks crossing the point of no return on climate change, with disastrous consequences for people across the planet and the natural systems that sustain them [...] The pledge made by world leaders in the Paris Agreement three years ago were really the bare minimum to avoid the worst impacts of climate change," he emphasises, and admonishes nations to be more energetic and to tackle the "direct existential

"threat" of climate change with a far greater awareness of the sheer urgency of the issue. "Put simply, we need to put the brake on deadly greenhouse gas emissions and drive climate action," because right now – as he explained just a few weeks ago to participants at the World Climate Conference in Katowice, Poland – for many people and whole nations, climate change is already "a matter of life and death".

It is with arguments like this that Guterres makes an impression and ensures that his voice is heard. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Guterres actually has no power in the classic sense of the term. In fact, it is the power of persuasion and the personality of this "man of vision, heart and action" (as the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini put it) that give weight to Guterres' words. A boon in a time when a revitalisation of multilateral cooperation is so urgently needed, for, as Guterres puts it, "Even in democracies, trust is being lost in our own institutions, in our governments and in our media. Mistrust and fear are growing. Even in Europe, people are starting to think that it might be better to close the doors – meaning the borders. But we know that this path leads down the dead-end street of history. Do people really want to overcome the consequences of climate change on their own? Or the challenges of digitalisation of the world or of artificial intelligence, challenges which will blow apart everything that we hold familiar?" In Guterres' view, the structure of whole societies will change completely. "The more complex the world, the greater the risks, and the more need we will have for commonality. The United Nations provides a platform for the cultivation of common interests." (Stern, 25.2.2018)

V.

In a time when universal rights are being progressively undermined and democratic principles are coming under increasing pressure, the Board of Directors of the Society for the Conferring of the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen elect to honour the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, as an outstanding advocate for the European model of society, for pluralism, tolerance and dialogue, for open and caring societies, for the strengthening and consolidation of multilateral cooperation and for a community of nations that will effectively meet the existential challenges of the 21st century, especially diminishing the North-South Divide and protecting our natural environment.

The award ceremony is meant as a sign of encouragement to all those who wish to strengthen Europe's role in the world's combined efforts for freedom, understanding, social and territorial cohesion of nations, and for the well-being of our "human family".