

## Address given by Mário Soares on the establishment of a European Economic Area (Lisbon, 29 October 1990)

**Caption:** On 29 October 1990, during the state visit to Portugal by Mauno Koivisto, President of the Republic of Finland, Mário Soares, President of the Portuguese Republic, delivers an address at the Ajuda Palace in Lisbon in which he points out the benefits of a large European Economic Space (EES), later to become the European Economic Area (EEA), involving the Member States of the European Economic Community (EEC) and those of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA).

**Source:** SOARES, Mário. *Intervenções*. Volume 5. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1991. ISBN 972-27-0434-6. p. 259-264.

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**Last updated:** 05/07/2016

## Towards a European economic area: EEC and EFTA \*

It gives me great pleasure to be able to welcome Your Excellency, your wife and your distinguished colleagues and to say what an honour it is to meet the official representative of the people of Finland, a friendly nation from the far side of Europe, on a state visit to Portugal for the first time. The distance separating our two countries and the political circumstances that have influenced the history of Portugal and Finland since the middle of this century have not favoured the close contact that we would have liked.

The fact that Portugal suffered a lengthy dictatorship and that Finland legitimately adopted a reserved position, keeping its distance from the European security organisations, may have helped to restrict the development of our relations.

This visit is, therefore, taking place against an extremely positive international backdrop and should be used by both of our countries to promote closer ties at all levels and in a wide variety of areas.

To achieve this, I believe that we must exploit the fruitful experience of our coexistence as loyal, enterprising partners in EFTA, to which we cannot help feeling allied because it has been so beneficial for our development and which continues to benefit us today through the EFTA Industrial Development Fund.

In the last two years, our bilateral economic relations have shown signs of improving: Finnish investment in Portugal has grown fivefold since 1989, while Portuguese exports to Finland have increased by 51 %, if we compare January to August that year with the same period this year. These figures speak for themselves and show just how much there is to exploit to our mutual advantage in terms of bilateral relations.

Mr President: the position that Finland has maintained on the international stage in recent years must be understood in the context that created it and which prevailed until quite recently.

In view of the major democratic changes that have taken place in Eastern Europe, it must now be acknowledged that the wisdom of Presidents Paasikivi and Kekkonen was ultimately the mainstay in safeguarding Finland's independence and democratic development.

Considering your huge neighbour to the east, this was a noteworthy historical achievement that we cannot allow to go unheralded.

I had many opportunities to appreciate that wisdom and realism, particularly in numerous conversations with my dear friend Kalevi Sorsa and, more recently, during the era of the Soviet Union, which I was going to visit on an official basis at the time. The frank and open way in which Your Excellency and members of your Government briefed me was very useful in helping me to understand the changes that that country was going through at the time and fuelled my conviction that Mr Gorbachev's intentions were sincere and that he dearly wanted to carry out the irreversible process of modernising Soviet society as quickly as possible.

No one at the time would have dared to think that a public debate would be held in the USSR on the merits of establishing a pluralist democratic society with a liberal economy or that its leaders would — at least in theory — face the possibility of participating in a revitalised NATO in the future or that they would promote and agree to the revision of the Treaty on European Union itself.

Similarly, no one would have dreamed that the Berlin Wall — like the Iron Curtain — would be on the point of falling and that Germany would finally achieve its longed-for unification.

It would also have been implausible to accept that the Baltic states would bravely proclaim their desire for independence, openly challenging the political balances set in the post-war era in the absence of their people's legitimate aspirations.

Little time has passed since then, yet how much progress has been made in the last year!

It is true that nations continue to long for sufficient economic development to guarantee that their return to the free world is irreversible. This is because, as we know, democracy and freedom are empty and are always under threat if they are not based on solid economic foundations that provide minimum levels of welfare and social justice.

Against this background, the Europe of 12, a centre of stability and economic progress, freedom and peace — in the midst of a process of institutional development — will naturally be called upon to play a leading role. The Community, a dynamic factor in the architecture of the new Europe, remains faithful to the spirit of openness and solidarity that was a mark of its founding countries, and which is now an integral part of the invaluable cultural and human legacy that we all ultimately share.

The aid plans for Central and Eastern Europe which are currently being drawn up or implemented are the most tangible manifestation of this political will.

The negotiations currently under way with the EFTA countries for setting up and implementing the ambitious project of the European Economic Area, together with the consideration also being given to the future institutionalisation of the CSCE and the reorganisation of NATO and the European defence systems, reflect the healthy debate in which Europeans — all Europeans — are engaged, seeking a way forward and a future for the Old Continent that will give it the audible voice in the world to which its rich civilisation entitles it.

We are, therefore, at a decisive historic crossroads. Since the old political and ideological structures underpinning the now virtually exhausted system of international relations disappeared from the map, many of the principles and notions with which we used to live and that we thought were immutable have suddenly become inadequate. Political and defence alliances became obsolete overnight, as there was no longer an enemy. The priority of security has now been replaced by the requirement for cooperation and development. We must be capable of shaping this new factor: the economic and political interdependence of the states and nations of modern-day Europe.

A new concept of sharing sovereignty is now arising in the Community and must be exploited. This involves new responsibilities that must be freely acknowledged, shared and exercised by everyone so that the most varied policies, particularly protection of the natural environment, may be harmonised. These are all vital strategic options that must be examined and seen as a whole. Only in this way can we be certain that the possibility of a return to the past, when ad hoc balances and regional conflicts alternated as a result of hopelessly outdated ideological and nationalistic intransigence and radicalism, has been eliminated once and for all.

This essentially means fostering the renewal of the internal fabric of a new, enlarged Europe, ensuring the triumph of political pragmatism, common sense and realism. It would be unforgivable if a lack of creative clarity of vision and political courage deprived us of our spirit and wit and if, in the present economic circumstances, we squandered all the creative force that accompanies and drives this turbulence that will mark the turn of the century.

I am certain that, under Your Excellency's distinguished Presidency, Finland will make a supreme contribution to this whole process, in line with the measures that it has taken domestically in recent decades, and will enrich this broad debate with the experience acquired not only within EFTA but also in the context of cooperation with the Scandinavian countries and their prudent relations with their great Soviet neighbour.

Other challenges, however, require our attention, Mr President.

Encouraging signs are emerging from the release of resources that were once directed towards heavy expenditure on intensive weaponry. There are great expectations for the most disadvantaged nations, to whom much of these funds must be directed in order to finance structural development projects.

The countries of southern Africa, particularly Angola and Mozambique, where internal pacification processes are currently under way — which we support — should benefit from this type of aid once lasting peace has

been achieved.

In this regard, I must express to Your Excellency our enormous appreciation for the laudable position that Finland has long adopted of contributing a considerable percentage of its GDP to various UN development projects in various parts of the world, which has also benefited Portuguese-speaking countries.

Finland, however, has not limited its involvement on the international stage to development aid. Your country, Mr President, has contributed in military terms on a regular and exemplary basis to almost all United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Against the backdrop of the current crisis in the Gulf, this type of intervention must be highlighted. The military annexation of Kuwait — unanimously condemned by the international community — is an example of the risk that we run of serious regional conflicts breaking out in various parts of the world, in clear breach of the most elementary principles of international law, with no likelihood of an appropriate immediate response. We believe that the time has come once more to reappraise the system for mobilising United Nations multilateral security forces so that due support may be given to the increasing role that this institution has been playing in recent years.

Only in this way will the United Nations — and what it represents for the international community as a guarantor of peace and international law — be protected from impotence and disregard, with the unforeseeable consequences that this would have for everyone, i.e. the risk of serious regional crises being reignited by transgressors who refuse to observe the rules of international law and who are encouraged by impunity, or rather by the fact that it is impossible for them to be compelled to comply with mandatory UN decisions.

In this connection, I must make reference to an issue of particular concern to us: the case of East Timor. This also constitutes an unacceptable military annexation that has interrupted the normal course of a process of self-determination, with disregard for the resolutions adopted at the time by the UN Security Council and General Assembly, thus preventing the people of East Timor from exercising their legitimate right to self-determination and independence, faithful to the identity of their national destiny.

We are certain that Finland will be sensitive in this case, as it has been in similar cases, to the flagrant violation of human and political rights in this territory.

Mr President: we are experiencing times of change. To paraphrase Camões, the greatest Portuguese poet, I would say that, when times change, minds change. But the ideas that continue to drive men and nations remain unchanged: peace, freedom, justice, respect for the law, progress, solidarity.

Everything, in fact, that we fought for and that began to come to fruition in a very different context in 1975, with the Helsinki Final Act.

It is in invoking that spirit of Helsinki, which embodies this turn of the century, that I wish to raise my glass and ask you all to join me in a toast to future peace, to the personal happiness of President Mauno Koivisto and his wife and to ever closer friendly and cooperative relations between Portugal and Finland.

\* Speech given at the Palace of Ajuda on 29 October 1990 during the state visit of the President of the Republic of Finland, Mauno Koivisto.