Address given by Rui Patrício on the Trade Agreement between Portugal and the EEC (Brussels, 22 July 1972)

Caption: On 22 July 1972, at the signing in Brussels of the Trade Agreement between Portugal and the European Economic Community (EEC), Rui Patrício, Portuguese Foreign Minister, delivers an address in which he places particular emphasis on the need to deepen relations and extend the areas of cooperation between Portugal and the European Communities.

Source: Archives historiques du Conseil de l'Union européenne, Bruxelles, Rue de la Loi 175. Fonds CEE et CEEA, CM2. CM2 1972. Dossier concernant les accords entre la CEE et les États de l'AELE non candidats de l'adhésion (Autriche, Islande, Portugal, Suède, Suisse). Signés le 22.07.1972, CM2/1972-1622.

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Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to represent my Government at this ceremony.

The negotiations we have been conducting with the Communities have culminated in the agreements that have just been signed. The Portuguese Government is fully aware of the importance of these acts and of all that they imply.

I stated clearly on 24 November 1970, when we began negotiating, that Portugal was ready to go as far as possible in her contacts with the Communities. The outcome of those contacts leaves no room for doubt that substantial progress has been made towards the great goal common to all of us: the forging of closer links between the countries of Western Europe. We are genuinely anxious that this ambitious, yet necessary undertaking should succeed, and I believe I speak for everyone when I say that I hope it will extend further and further. What we have achieved today will thus represent only one step - a necessary and essential one - in that direction.

Today we see before us what we have long striven for. Together, on the terms and conditions made necessary by circumstances and on the basis of the great reality constituted by the Communities, we have created a vast European area for trade in industrial products, which represents an extremely important step along the road to European integration. The free trade system which will be set up by our agreements will, I am sure, demonstrate that we were right when we affirmed our desire to co-operate together in a single and effective scheme. Our experience over the last few years has prepared us for the task which now faces us.

And in this same spirit of initiative and progress, I feel I must draw attention to our desire, on which we shall continue to lay stress, to extend our co-operation further into those areas which are essential to Portugal. Throughout the negotiations, we have emphasized the importance of agriculture in Portuguese foreign trade and that it is essential to Portugal that there should be no diminution of the degree of trade liberalization already achieved in Europe. I am firmly convinced that time and experience will lead eventually to certain requirements of the Portuguese economy and certain disparities in her development, particularly as regards technology, being provided for in a manner which will satisfy both the interests of my country and the interests of the Communities.

I should emphasise immediately that many of the provisions of the agreements will considerably assist the progress of industrialisation in my country, a progress we regard as essential. Furthermore, the acceptance of the evolutionary nature of the agreement with the EEC permits us to hope that the aim of creating a genuinely united Europe will be attained, for the good of all those concerned, in the years to come.

It is my pleasant duty to say at this point how much we have appreciated the efforts of all the Governments and of the Community bodies to make possible the agreements we have concluded. The exceptional competence and indefatigable patience of the men whose task it was to negotiate and then to define the terms of the compromise solutions reached, deserve all the praise I can bestow upon them.

In signing the documents linking us to the Communities and marking the end of our negotiations, I wish to reiterate Portugal's firm intention to participate in the great task undertaken by the Communities and our deep conviction that the agreements cemented today represent a most important stage in our efforts towards the strengthening of our continent and the progress of our peoples.