

**5th EUROSAI/OLACEFS Conference
LISBON 2007**

CLOSING SESSION

**SPEECH OF HIS EXCELLENCY, THE COUNSELLOR PRESIDENT
OF THE *TRIBUNAL DE CONTAS* (COURT OF AUDITORS),
DR. GUILHERME D'OLIVEIRA MARTINS**

Lisbon, Ministry of Finance, Session Hall, 11 May 2007

President of INTOSAI, Prof. Arpad Kovács

President of EUROSAI, Prof. Dr. Dieter Engels

President of OLACEFS, Dr. Rafael Hernán Contreras Rodríguez

Secretary-General of EUROSAI, D. Ubaldo Nieto de Alba

Representative of the Executive Secretary of OLACEFS, Dr. Francisco Rodríguez

President of the Organization of the Supreme Audit Institutions of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), Counsellor Certório Biote

Secretary General of the Organization of the Supreme Audit Institutions of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), Minister Luciano Brandão Alves de Souza

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After the work under the scope of the 5th EUROSAI/OLACEFS on Fiscal Sustainability, Presentation of Accounts and Accountability, I believe it is indispensable to make a short "final balance".

Before going any further, after the work carried out at this Conference and at this stage, I must reaffirm what I mentioned in the Opening Session of this Conference, concerning the interest that the theme attracted, which has just been reinforced. In fact, it was evident that the perspectives assumed by the EUROSAI members and

by the representatives of the OLACEFS member states are complementary.

In truth, the interest that the theme of this Conference attracted, was materialized itself not only in the interventions and written contributions revealing the great attention that has been paid to these issues by the Supreme Audition Institutions, but also in the approval of a document of Conclusions and Recommendations that will certainly be a framework reference to the activities that must be carried out in order to promote the fiscal sustainability of the public sector.

We can also speak about a “spirit of Lisbon” which tries to link sustainable economic and social development, cohesion and trust, competitiveness and justice. By mentioning the notion of “social capital”, it deals with the need to create conditions so that the credibility of the institutions of the democratic and social legal State may be reinforced through the action of the Supreme Auditing Institutions and of the Courts of Auditors.

Citizens need to trust their institutions, and trust that the institutions will respect their will, and know that there is someone who systematically safeguards the good use of public money and assets. Moreover, it is urgent to link fiscal sustainability, distributive justice and intergenerational equity. Public expenditure shall therefore be scrutinized in a permanent manner. Its efficiency must always be verified.

I believe of course that it is necessary to view the guidelines and recommendations that resulted from our work, not as definitive ideas, as something finished and concluded, but rather as a starting point and basis of work that is ahead of us under the scope of our activities.

In truth, many concerns and issues were dealt with in the speeches and in the debates. These are included in the approved conclusions, notably: the reform of the budgeting systems or the drafting of accounts and financial statements by the bodies of the Public Administration, the need to revise methods and, in most cases, to reorganize our own institutions in order to adapt them to future challenges.

Under the scope of the theme of this Conference, there is an expression that guides all considerations and is translated by the notion of responsibility in its broad meaning given by the English expression *accountability*.

It is in fact the obligation to render accounts that should be taken into account in a wide understanding of accountability to which we shall be all subject, mainly the Supreme Auditing Institutions, for the nature of its role. It is clear that this obligation is associated with the ability to make the public service accountable and assume it as a duty and a sign of citizenship.

It became clear that transparency, stability, accountability, *fairness* and efficiency are key elements to be considered by the Supreme Auditing Institutions.

Sustainability of public accounts must therefore be in the forefront of our concerns in the framework of our mandates, trying to avoid duplications or conflicts of power, and from the achievement of objectives of legality, economy, economic criteria, and efficiency and rigorous discipline of public money. Thus, we act on behalf of citizens in order to create specific conditions so that public interest be fully guaranteed.

And if I spoke about a “spirit of Lisbon”, I did it to reinforce the complementary nature of both the points of view and the steps

– on the one hand, the need to strengthen rigour in choosing investments and public expenditure, so that these have a positive social impact (in Education, in Health, in social protection policies and in covering social risks)

– on the other hand, the need to pursue development, economic and social cohesion and competition policies, in order to make public investment more efficient and materialize it in tangible results that go against poverty, ignorance and backwardness...

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the *Tribunal de Contas* (Court of Auditors) of Portugal, the host institution of this Conference, I was very honoured and pleased to host these debates on such an up-to-date theme and that project us towards the future.

I renew my thanks to all delegations of the Supreme Auditing Institutions that participated in this Conference, for their invaluable contributions and interventions.

I thank all institutions that supported us and cooperated with us, making it possible to carry out this Conference, notably the Presidents and Secretaries-General of EUROSAI and OLACEFS. At national level, I am grateful for the Ministry of Finance that supported this initiative in many ways.

I also thank the organization team of *the Tribunal de Contas* (Court of Auditors) of Portugal, which did its best to make this Conference a useful, important and pleasant event. Likewise, I thank all translators and interpreters, who allowed us to communicate efficiently.

A social and cultural programme still awaits us, which will, in a certain way, appease the more complex character of our debates.

I am pleased to invite you all and I would like you to participate in them, as this is an opportunity to offer to those who, probably, have not been able to know Portugal, a little bit of the Portuguese culture and history.