Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Colleagues, Ambassadors and Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start, Mr. Chairman, by congratulating you and your government for the hard and productive work done at the helm of our Organization. Through Andorra’s diligent and wise Chairmanship, the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms have remained prominently on the Council of Europe’s agenda, thereby furthering these core values in Europe.

Portugal is fully committed to the European model built on the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

In line with our unwavering commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, Portugal is a candidate for the United Nations Human Rights Council, for the 2015-2017 mandate. We thank the support to our bid from many of our members.

Mr. Chairman,

The Council of Europe, with its pan-European scope and long-standing expertise, has contributed decisively to Europe’s success. Our
organization is also committed to promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law in neighbouring regions.

Today’s crisis is also an opportunity for the Council of Europe. Portugal is certain that this organization will continue to live up to its responsibilities, reform itself and, together with its member States, successfully face new challenges.

In order to do so, the Council of Europe must achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness, taking into consideration increasingly competing demands and scarce resources. These efforts must be comprehensive and no Institution of the Council of Europe, including the European Court of Human Rights, should be excluded from them.

The Council of Europe’s monitoring bodies collect an impressive amount of information highlighting human rights and democracy problems in our societies. Whilst fully respecting their independence, we believe that the monitoring mechanisms should improve their effectiveness, enhance coordination and avoid duplication. Careful consideration should also be given to the risk of “monitoring fatigue”.

Enhanced coordination between the Council of Europe and other international organizations such as the European Union, the OSCE and
the United Nations must remain a key objective in a mutually reinforcing way.

I totally agree with my Irish colleague, that a strong strategic partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Union is of the utmost importance.

Portugal attaches particular attention to the Council of Europe’s policy towards neighbouring countries. This is a clear example of successful cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Union.

In this respect, I would like to highlight the role of the North-South Centre and its valuable experience in working with neighbouring regions. Over the last two decades, the Centre has successfully promoted democratic values and principles which are at the core of the Council of Europe’s mission. Its unique configuration and close cooperation with relevant institutions and civil society have genuine added value.

After six months of dedicated work, I am confident that we succeeded in refocusing the Centre’s mission for the next two years. It will be able to contribute further to the consolidation of political and democratic reforms in neighbouring countries and raise awareness on intercultural
dialogue and global education and women’s role in societies. With the important support of the European Union, the Centre will certainly attract renewed interest and new members. Allow me to warmly welcome Andorra’s decision to join the Centre and invite others to follow suit.

In closing, I would like to express Portugal’s best wishes to the incoming Chairmanship and assure Armenia that it can count on our full support in the coming months.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.