

**Speech for the opening session of the conference**

***Plant UP – 1st International Meeting on Greenhouse Horticulture***

**Vairão Agrarian Campus, 2014.09.18**

Mrs. Mayor of Vila do Conde, Dr.<sup>a</sup> Elisa Ferraz

Dear Dean of the Faculty of Sciences, Professor António Fernando Silva

Dear Vice-President of the Institute for Agricultural Development of the Northern Region,  
Professor Jorge Gonçalves

Dear conference organizers

Distinguished conference speakers

Distinguished guests of this session

Dear delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by greeting the members of this opening panel and welcoming all the more than 200 delegates coming from most respected Research Centres concerned to participate in this Plant UP – 1st International Meeting on Greenhouse Horticulture.

Welcome to Portugal, welcome to the University of Porto and in this occasion to the Vairão Agrarian Campus – a top-level campus of Agricultural Sciences.

A special thanks is due to the Mayor of Vila do Conde, Dr. Elisa Ferraz, whose presence here for sure signals the link of the University of Porto with the Communities, in this case the region where this campus is located. Be sure, Madam, that you are always very welcome in our University and it is indeed a honor to have you with us in the opening of this important initiative of our University.

I also welcome our guest speakers Professors Silke Hemming, from Wageningen UR Greenhouse Horticulture, University of Wageningen, the Netherlands, Esteban Baeza from Centro IFAPA “La Mojonera” – Almeria, in neighbouring Spain, Meir Teitel from Volcani Center, Israel and Eiji Goto from Chiba University, Japan, and thank them in advance for the scientific contribution that they are going to give to this conference.

I am delighted to address this audience, in this opening session, for what this conference means and these are not words of occasion. Indeed these are words of someone that in all his professional life, as academic and educator, as researcher, as Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and now as Rector, has been working for more than 35 years in favour of

national and international cooperation. In fact, this meeting has all to do with my programme of work for the University of Porto, for the next 4 years – a programme made of commitment to national and international cooperation, with other academic institutions, with companies and other organizations from our society.

So, the University of Porto very much welcomes the scientific debate, the sharing of knowledge and the global dissemination of good practices. We are an outward-looking institution, available to interact with various national and international institutions in a ‘cross-fertilisation’ process.

Having the preceding in mind, it is worth mentioning to you that over the past two weeks, from the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September till today, this is the 5<sup>th</sup> international meeting where I have the pleasure of being in opening sessions, here at the University – a congress concerned with thermophysical properties, with circa 500 hundred delegates, a world congress on education sciences with over 2400 delegates, a congress on chemical engineering with 400 plus participants a conference in astrophysics with 200 plus participants and now this conference.

This means that over the past two weeks the University of Porto and the city of Porto were the places where more than 3700 scientists from so diverse areas and from all over the world met to discuss science. This is one of the contributions that Porto gives to Science.

On this major issue of cooperation, let me still share with you some thoughts:

Cooperation, national and international cooperation, is the only way for the future in our open and global world of this XXI century.

The proactive contact and cooperation between academic and research communities, and between these and the society as a whole, is decisive for educational, scientific, technological and intellectual advancement in all fields of study.

Our success in doing well, through national and international cooperation, is largely dependent on how much and how strongly we are able to promote one major value in our open society. The keyword for this value is TRUST, and this value we shall be able to promote in as much as our quality is perceived and understood by all stakeholders and partners, both at national and international level.

The dimension of cooperation that we are able to promote and attract is thus simultaneously a promoter of our development and a key indicator of the stage of development where we stand.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is absolutely clear to me that this conference is an event of great academic and scientific interest that brings much value to our Faculty of Sciences, to Vairão Agrarian Campus, to the

University of Porto, and its academic community. You are going to have the opportunity of hearing to most prestigious speakers, addressing topics of undeniable scientific relevance. It is therefore an opportunity for our community specifically concerned with research about greenhouse horticulture, to share their recent achievements, to exchange valuable experiences and, not the least, to inspire young researchers for their so relevant work.

For all such reasons, it is quite gratifying for the University of Porto to host this conference and I take this opportunity to congratulate the members of the Organizing Committee for their successful effort in arranging this 1st Plant UP. I address all the many involved in the organization in the persons of my colleagues and researchers José Luis Santos, Susana Carvalho, Ana Aguiar and Jorge Gonçalves. Institutionally, the Faculty of Sciences and the Institute for Agricultural Development of the Northern Region are to be congratulated for organising this conference. I very much hope that the conference raises – as it is hoped – a plural, interdisciplinary and forward-looking discussion on Protected Cropping.

Let me take this opportunity to highlight the excellent work on crop protection that has been developed at Vairão Agrarian Campus, institution that aims to increase the competitiveness, sustainability and innovation capacity in the agricultural sector. Vairão Agrarian Campus is at the forefront in terms of developing new designs of greenhouses, creation of new roofing materials, installation of plant factories and promoting efficient use of energy and water in modern horticulture. Moreover, Vairão Agrarian Campus has been strengthening its interdisciplinary training and research activities, gradually asserting itself as a true competency center. For all this, Vairão Agrarian Campus is a reference institution in Portugal in the area of agriculture and livestock.

Dear speakers and delegates,

Let me give you a very short introduction of the University of Porto.

The University of Porto was formally established on the 22nd of March 1911, but its origins date back to the 18th century, with a succession of institutions, the first of them created in 1762, that after several merges gave rise to the University in 1911. So, we are speaking of more than 250 years of history and experience in education and research.

Specifically, over the past 40 years, the University of Porto has been putting a lot of effort into expanding its international scope, as well as promoting the exchange of advanced knowledge with experts across the globe.

Today our institution is the second largest of Portuguese universities, with more than 32.000 students, more than 1800 FTE Faculty and more than 1600 technical support staff.

We are organised into 14 faculties, covering essentially all areas of knowledge, and we are the academic partner of a business school, in association with the major companies and institutions of the region.

About 10% of our students come from 112 countries. About 10% of our students work for their PhD.

Our research is mainly organised into 51 certified research units and is responsible for about 23% of the Portuguese scientific production indexed in the Web of Science.

Several indicators of academic quality show a continuous progress along the years.

The University of Porto is top in Portugal in several European rankings, and catching up with the top 100 European universities, being clearly within this group in several fields.

In the current academic year 2014-2015, four thousand new students have chosen the University of Porto to study, this being the highest rate ever of places filled in Portuguese public education: 96%. As in previous academic years, the University of Porto is still the most sought-after Portuguese institution, as the first option, in the first round of national examinations for university admission. More than 25% of applicants to higher Education Institutions have chosen the University of Porto as their first option. The figures are indicative of the university's reputation and of its top grade entry requirements. We attract the best of our young people finishing their secondary education.

It is clear that we must do better, much better, tomorrow, than we are doing today, but we have good reasons to say that we are doing well.

Dear speakers and delegates,

For those of you that are in Porto for the very first time, a short historical note:

According to historical descriptions, we can trace back to the days of the Romans, more than 2000 years ago, the existence of a settlement known as Portus Cale, located by the Douro River, close to where the Luis I bridge and the Port Wine cellars are today. The name of Portugal derived from Portus Cale. So, we come from ancient civilizations. Therefore, I would like to invite you to enjoy the architectural heritage and the cultural and human wealth that our city has to offer, and also to invite you to visit the University of Porto.

We appreciate very much you being here. We wish you a pleasant day and for some of you that came to visit us a pleasant stay in our city and a very fruitful conference.

Thank you.

18 September, 2014  
Vairão Agrarian Campus  
Sebastião Feyo de Azevedo, Rector