

Speech for the Opening Session of the 11th Yes Meeting

Sebastião Feyo de Azevedo, 16 September 2016

Dear Secretary of State Assistant and of Health, Professor Fernando Araújo,

Dear Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Professor Maria Amélia Ferreira

Dear President of Ordem dos Médicos, Professor José Manuel da Silva

Dear President of 11th Yes Meeting Scientific Committee, Professor Francisco Rocha Gonçalves

Dear President of the 11th Yes Meeting, Ana Vaz

Distinguished conference speakers

Honourable guests of this session

Dear delegates

Dear conference organizers

Dear teachers and researchers

Dear students,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin by greeting you all and in particular the members of this opening panel, the organizers, the speakers and the delegates of the 11th Yes Meeting.

As in last year's meeting, I really have to start by praising the entrepreneurial capacity of the Faculty of Medicine students, of the University of Porto, who were responsible for organizing this so remarkable meeting. Your effort is an example for the student community at our university, considering the academic and scientific benefits derived from hosting an event of this magnitude, prestige and quality.

Indeed, the 11th Yes Meeting has a very significant academic relevance given its international dimension, the fact that it opens doors for young scientists to showcase their research projects, the relevance of the scientific topics under discussion and the high quality of guest speakers. The participation of such speakers will be a very rewarding scientific experience for many young scientists, and will enhance their motivation for their research projects.

It is, therefore, very gratifying for the University of Porto to host the 11th Yes Meeting. Moreover, it meets one of the strategic aims of the University of Porto: to strengthen the internationalisation of the university through the organisation of scientific events.

The University of Porto is fully committed with a policy that aims at expanding its international projection, at promoting academic cooperation in education and the sharing of advanced knowledge among experts from different parts of the world. We firmly believe that the proactive contact between academic and research communities is decisive to scientific, technological and intellectual advancement in any area of study.

At this point I have to let you know that this commitment brought very recently a very important international recognition: just 2 days ago, on the 14th September, professor Maria de Fátima Marinho, our Vice-rector for international cooperation was in Liverpool, receiving the very relevant “Rewarding Excellence, 2016 EAIE Award – Institutional Award for Innovation in Internationalisation”, with which the University of Porto was distinguished by The European Association for International Education (EAIE).

The University of Porto hopes to strengthen its leading role in life sciences and health. To that end, it has scientific critical mass and excellent R&D centres, in addition to offering high quality graduate and post-graduate training in this area, with hospitals open to scientific research, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies interested in working with us, and international cooperation agreements with reputable foreign universities.

The University of Porto is aware of the scientific and economic potential of life sciences and health. Medicine, biomedicine, oncology and molecular biology, bioengineering, neurosciences, pharmaceutical sciences, marine sciences, geriatrics, physiology and immunology are of great scientific and economic applicability. In fact, further to being exported, to developing innovation activities and to creating qualified employment, the health sector in Portugal, today, generates a significant turnover.

The recent development of the health sector led to the establishment of the Health Cluster Portugal, a competitiveness cluster to which the University of Porto is associated, with the head-office in Greater Porto. The location of this cluster is important: in fact, many of the major players and resources of life sciences and health in Portugal are found in the northern region, in the city of Porto and in its university.

Therefore, my message to young biomedical experts is one of hope and encouragement. Life sciences and health have developed considerably in developed countries, with all that it means in terms of opportunities for scientific, professional and personal achievement. As we have seen, Portugal is no exception. So, if young Portuguese biomedical experts so desire, they can make a career in this country, thereby contributing to the socioeconomic development of Portugal and to improving the quality of life of its population.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to greet the speakers and delegates of the 11th Yes Meeting.

We are honoured to host two Nobel laureates in Medicine, some of the most world-renowned biomedical scientists and about 400 biomedical students, coming from 25 different countries.

We are delighted to having you here and will do everything within our reach to make sure that your participation in the meeting is enriching, that your stay in Porto is pleasant and that your visit to our University is stimulating.

Let me very briefly give you a note about the University.

Although the origins of the University of Porto date back to the 18th century, it was formally established on the 22nd of March 1911. Today our institution is one of the largest Portuguese universities. With more than 30,000 students, the University of Porto is made up by 14 faculties covering all major areas of knowledge. We are also the academic partner of a business school, in association with the major companies and institutions of the region.

The University of Porto has 50 certified research units and 9 major interface institutes, being responsible for more than 20% of the Portuguese scientific production indexed in the Web of Science. Several indicators of academic quality show a continuous progress along the years, and particularly a consolidated reputation nationally and at international level.

This high scientific performance has allowed the University of Porto to improve its position in international academic rankings, being the Portuguese institution with the best score in several of those rankings. Today, the University of Porto is catching up with the top 100 European universities.

It is this reputation, understood by our society, a reputation that results in ‘trust’ of the society on the quality of education that we offer to our young people, that is responsible for the remarkable attractiveness that we are able to show of brilliant young students for our courses. This year as in previous years the University of Porto is top in Portugal in all indicators of student quality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I know that many of you are in Porto for the very first time. Therefore, I would like to invite you to enjoy the heritage, architectural, cultural and human wealth the city has to offer.

Discovering Porto will bring you many surprises. You can find traces of the medieval period; many works of art from the Romance and Baroque styles; neo-classical and neo-gothic buildings; the old part of the city by the riverside, which was the reason why it received the World Heritage title; some of the finest contemporary architecture and the bridges linking the margins of the Douro River.

Take full advantage of the so many things that the city has to offer. And, still speaking of the Douro River, if you find the time go by boat up the river. It will be an unforgettable trip.

Thank you.

Opening Session of the 11th Yes Meeting

Faculdade de Medicina da Universidade do Porto

Sebastião Feye de Azevedo, Reitor