Intervenção de Hilário Teixeira, Delegado da Associação de Ex-Deputados da Assembleia da República de Portugal, na Conferência da Associação Europeia de Antigos Parlamentares do Conselho da Europa (FP/AP) a 16 de outubro de 2026

“ Dear colleagues

Buon pomeriggio, vi invio i cordiali saluti dell'Associazione portoghese degli ex membri del Parlamento.

The migration crisis in the Central Mediterranean remains one of the greatest humanitarian and geopolitical challenges facing Europe today. Fuelled by armed conflicts, political instability and extreme poverty in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, the Maghreb and the Middle East, the route linking North Africa to Italy remains the busiest and most dangerous in the world, generating a continuous flow of people who risk their lives on clandestine crossings.

At the epicentre of this crisis lies the island of Sicily and, more specifically, the small island of Lampedusa, which is administratively part of Sicily. Due to its geographical proximity to the coasts of Tunisia and Libya, Lampedusa acts as the main ‘gateway’ to the European Union. Given the island’s small size, Sicily acts as a major sorting hub. Via sea and air links, thousands of migrants are transferred daily to Sicilian ports such as Porto Empedocle and Catania, placing a strain on local infrastructure, health services and reception centres, particularly with regard to the protection of unaccompanied minors.

Faced with this reality, the European Union’s role has centred on a two-pronged strategy: strengthening internal controls and externalising borders. With the adoption of the new Pact on Migration and Asylum, the EU is seeking to speed up screening and deportation procedures at its external borders. At the same time, Brussels has channelled billions of euros into cooperation agreements with transit and origin countries, such as Tunisia and Egypt, funding their coastguards to stem departures in exchange for economic aid. Although this approach has led to a significant reduction in arrivals in recent years, the European strategy faces harsh criticism from humanitarian organisations, which warn of human rights violations in African detention centres and the continuing loss of life in the Mediterranean.

To steer an effective and sustainable long-term migration policy, the European Union needs to balance the security of its borders with its founding values of human rights. The main pillars of this strategy must include the creation of legal and safe migration routes, thereby reducing the incentive for human trafficking, and a mechanism for mandatory and equitable solidarity in the distribution of refugees amongst all Member States, thereby alleviating the pressure on border regions such as Sicily. Above all, the EU must shift from a reactive approach to long-term structural investment in countries of origin, focused on socio-economic development and political stability, tackling the root of the problem directly where it begins.”