Welcome to all of you and thank you for having responded to this initiative. Welcome to the Azores. I want first of all to thank the President of the Azores Region, Carlos Manuel Cesar, for the hospitality, for the warmth of the welcome, and for the opportunity we have to meet here, to talk about this very important issue – “the role of the regions in globalisation”. I would also of course like to greet all those at our conference. We will have an opportunity over these two days to discuss together and to try and take a step forward in our shared analysis and in our work.

This meeting is of great importance. I want to stress that. This is not one in the normal round of conferences that the Regions organise from time to time on one theme or another. Above all it is the first time that Regions from different continents have come together with the intention of debating the institutional, political and cultural applications of globalisation. It is also the first time that we have all met together on this subject with the explicit support of international institutions including the European Commission, the United Nations Organisation and its various agencies, the World Trade Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

I am first of all going to thank the staff of the CPMR who have worked to make this meeting possible and notably its General Secretary, Xavier Gizard, who initiated the event, whose strong commitment and arguments in its favour have undoubtedly helped to convince us. There are a number of reasons why this meeting is needed. I am not going to offer an analysis of all of these. We will look at the various themes in greater detail during the three Conference sessions, but I believe that it is important above all to share our experiences, analyses, visions and perspectives.

For myself, I would like to highlight three key themes, three general issues as a framework for our discussions.

First issue. The globalisation of the world raises a major institutional issue. What is this issue? I want to sum it up in a few words. The globalisation of the economy is a reality, it has a global dimension through the trade in goods, the movement of capital, exchanges of information and knowledge and movements of people, notably through major migration flows, but not exclusively. So goods, capital, information and people. All these have changed and acquired a global dimension. Can we say the same for democracy, politics and institutions? This is the critical question and I believe that the answer is still far from clear. Politics, institutional power and democracy have not taken on the same global dimension, or the same global influence. This is a lack of balance that has an effect on the conduct of economic, social and cultural affairs. We do of course have in today’s world supranational and international institutions. In first place, the UNO of course, which perhaps implements the dimension that is closest to what we are looking for, which is a global policy. We must of course give the UNO our full support, but we also need to acknowledge that its role and its activities are not accepted by everyone and by all countries with the same enthusiasm. There are many areas in which the role of the UNO is not recognised as that of a world government, providing global governance for the planet. One could even say that on certain issues, the role of the UNO has not been developed at the same pace as the changes in the world, time and culture. We are all aware that a reform of
the UNO and of its work is a major world concern. This is thus our first question because if there is a lack of balance between economic and financial governance and institutional and political governance, we will encounter problems and difficulties. Even our role, as Regions, will not be able to develop as it should. This question can thus be summed up by this statement: “Without an effective system of world governance, the present model of globalisation produces results that lack balance and that do not enable the achievement of sustainable development at the world level”. It is thus not solely an economic issue; it is a political, institutional and cultural issue. It cannot be resolved simply through the actions of the highest authorities. It also needs an impetus coming from below, through the territories, the Regions, the people. I would stress that it is the Regions that can above all fulfil this role: they represent the point of connection with the people, as can be seen in a variety of fields. We will return to this point during the debates.

Second issue: The relationship between the global dimension and the regional dimension. In recent years we have seen a backwards and forwards movement between those pushing towards the global dimension and those pushing in the other direction, towards the local and regional dimension. The adjective regional is open to interpretation. From one point of view, a continent can be a regional dimension. For me, a Region is my Region. This is Tuscany, it is Estrémadure, it is Provence Alpes Côte-d’Azur, it is the region of Salta, of Sousse, these are the Regions of our countries. I see a backwards and forwards movement that could be described as one of contrary polarisation. Whilst there are many factors pushing towards a global dimension, there is at the same time a need for a regional identity that takes account of all the particularities, specificities, one could say of the uniqueness. In this movement, there are sometimes exaggerated forms, extremes that make a regional identity into a point of separation from the rest of the world rather than an opportunity for a special and particular involvement in the construction of a general vision. But of course, in this movement, there are also reasonable requirements in terms of the need to protect certain cultural, historical forms, values, and traditions, which must not be crushed by a movement towards globalisation which includes a normalisation, a standardisation of the world. Dangers of this type always provoke negative reactions and I believe that the deliberations proposed by the CPMR in this seminar, about how we establish regional identities, Historical traditions, something that can add a positive element to the globalisation process, which must not be a reduction to the lowest common dominator, to a oneness, but rather the opportunity to encourage and appreciate differences? One could even speak, including about our political and cultural system, of biodiversity, because even cultural and political differences are biodiversity. I believe this is an important question, especially in a world that is often frustrated by the difficulties of change, in which differences are seen as being problems, as obstacles to progress in the development of quality. Our Regions are here to say that on the contrary through exchanges around our diversities, our experiences, we can achieve a positive outcome. Of course we need to protect this movement from any trends to standardisation, to a position of cultural, political and economic conformism. The opposite of a single worldview. This is my vision. Regionalisation is the opposite of a single worldview applied to the economic, financial and political dimension. The world cannot have, has never had, has never wanted and will never have a single worldview or otherwise, one could say that the only valid single worldview for me is peace, democracy, liberty and equality of opportunity for all the world’s Regions, for all the continents and for all people.

Third issue. In a global world, we need increased cooperation, partnerships and joint working. It is not just an ethical dimension that needs to be highlighted, of course. Ethics and morality are very important in a world that is unfortunately often dominated by the requirements of finance and material success. But we need cooperation and partnerships, especially in reducing the disparities that exist around the world, the imbalances, to be able to confront the issue of development but also above all its quality. I would like to stop talking about development in a generic sense. Development can be many things. Development is of course an extremely important thing, but we need to emphasise, above all now, its qualitative aspects. In the process of globalisation, as it is known with a number of words that remain synonyms, there is an open debate. Is it a positive or a negative process? You can find in the literature, in political positions, almost all shades of opinion between the two extremes of thought. Personally, I believe that we need to be wary of any ideological approach to the question. And not only, as President César pointed out, because it is impossible to deny this gravitational force. Of course one cannot deny the movement of globalisation: we need to seriously analyse it to establish that there are positive outcomes that must be encouraged. But we must also extend the analysis to the entire human dimension, highlighting some extremely negative processes that require cultural, institutional and even, I dare say, humanist initiatives from us in order to foster other ideas.

I would like to offer an extremely interesting remark from a philosopher, Yvan Illich, made a number of years ago during an event organised in Tuscany in the course of the first meeting on the theme of
globalisation. He said to us: “Be careful, because the globophiles and the globophobes – as he called the two
camps - the globophiles and the globophobes both tend towards the same outcome. The globophiles say that
globalisation is good and that nothing needs changing. The globophobes say that globalisation is bad and
that we cannot change anything”. In the end, they reach the same outcome. The two camps do not raise the
problems of change whilst the very problems of politics, institutions and progressive movements are
precisely the issue. Regions and institutions are facing these same problems, because the issues are real:
poverty, climate change, health, the environment, water and more generally social justice. We need to face
up to these issues, applying logic of cooperation and partnership. Because no Region, no part of the world
can resolve this on its own. International programmes are of course important. We need to cancel debt, to
provide humanitarian support for populations experiencing suffering, to possess a balanced and common
vision of the world’s development. But in this context, the support of the Regions is very important. This is
why the CPMR is negotiating a protocol of collaboration with the UNDP. This is why we support the
Millennium Goals for the key issues of our times and this is why we are asking Europe’s politicians to pay
greater attention to these issues. We understand the problems with the European budget but we are also
aware that only very limited resources are required to activate cooperation and partnership projects with the
regions of Africa, South America, Asia, and the Near East, for the achievement of absolutely essential
activities.

These are thus my three angles of approach: the institutional issues, the relationship between globalisation
and regionalisation, and the need for cooperation.

In conclusion, I would like to say that these three issues - and I hope all our friends from outside of Europe
will forgive me here - are extremely important for Europe, and notably for restoring confidence following
the blocked ratification of the draft Constitutional Treaty. But this will not happen solely by means of a
debate between governments. The pause in the thought process we see today is much more a pause than it is
a thought process. The Regions need to act and form a network of friends for a united Europe. This is my
way forward for recovering a world role for Europe. From the islands of the Azores, which can be defined as
peripheral and even as ultra-peripheral to Europe, we can send a vital message to Europe. We will never
have a sufficiently strong European policy if we do not have world level ambitions. Europe will not be
Europe unless it is at the centre of the world. And talking peace, security, quality of development, justice and
democracy.

There, I feel the themes of the debate have been launched. We will see very important contributions, and I
hope, with the assistance of President Cesar, that this Azores seminar will become a true foundation stone in
the construction of the future. Thank you for all your contributions to our work.