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**Discurso do Secretário de Estado da Defesa do Consumidor, João Torres,
na conferência «German-Portugal E-Commerce Roundtable»**

Lisboa, 24 outubro 2019

Dear Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Portugal, Mrs. Daniela Schlegel;

Dear President of the German Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Miguel Leichsenring Franco;

Dear President of ACEPI – Portuguese Digital Economy Association, Mr. Alexandre Nilo Fonseca;

Dear guests who honour us with your presence at this conference;

Ladies and gentlemen;

It is an honor for me to address you, on behalf of His Excellency the Minister in the Cabinet of the Prime Minister and of Economy, in this forum, which allows the reinforcement of the existing ties between Germany and Portugal. The centenary relationship between these two countries is of the utmost relevance, whether in cultural, social or economic terms. Today, hundreds of thousands of Portuguese citizens carry out their life projects on German territory, while there is an increase in the number of German citizens seeking to live in Portugal.

Existing ties have helped both countries to successfully respond to their main challenges. The investment of German companies in Portugal is crucial due to the number of jobs it creates, the dissemination of knowledge it instigates and the wealth it generates. The way in which several Portuguese workers integrate into the German business fabric is also a demonstration of the reciprocity of the benefits that come from this relationship.

In this regard, it is important to highlight the recent growth in trade relations between both countries. Over the past few years, the German market has been a major destination for Portuguese food and agricultural products, while exports of durable goods and capital goods produced in Germany have increased.

The strengthening of existing ties between the two countries should also be extended to the digital domain. The ongoing digital transformation will have a significant impact on global productivity and economic growth.

1. This growth should be inclusive, encompassing large enterprises and SMEs, industry and commerce, agriculture and services.

One of the consequences of the digitization process is the promotion of open sourcing and open innovation. To make this happen, the contribution of larger companies to the transformation of business ecosystems will be the key. By setting up business accelerators and innovation labs, these companies will support startups and innovative SMEs to access the resources they need and to discover new markets.

Cooperation between companies of different sizes will be of great importance so that the national productive fabric can keep up with the pace of transformation. The current gap in the digitization levels of large companies and SMEs is one of the main challenges facing the Portuguese economy. Although there is a growing number of Internet users and a higher penetration of e-commerce, the percentage of Portuguese SMEs with digital presence is low.

The answer to this challenge calls for the effort and cooperation between the public initiative, the private sector and the associative movement. This is why the Portuguese Government supports «ComércioDigital.pt», an initiative of ACEPI – Portuguese Digital Economy Association that aims to increase the number of companies in the commerce and services sectors that have a digital presence.

Even though there is no massive digital presence of Portuguese SMEs, it is important not to forget that companies like Critical Software, Feedzai or Talkdesk have taken the lead in this process. Digitization offers a wide range of opportunities for smaller businesses, allowing them to reach scale without mass, to customize their offerings and to differentiate their products.

Digital transformation poses challenges in the areas of human capital qualification, knowledge transfer between research centers and companies, as well as the modernization of public administration and the services it provides. It is precisely to these challenges that the Portuguese Government has sought to respond with the launch of programs such as INTERFACE and Portugal INCoDe.2030.

However, certain challenges related to the ongoing transformation process go beyond the national dimension. The new President of the European Commission, Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen, was peremptory in stating her intention to complete the creation of the Digital Single Market and to improve the liability and safety rules for digital platforms, services and products.

Continuing the work of the former European Commission team is crucial, especially with regard to the adoption of the Geoblocking Regulation, the prevention of consumer discrimination, and the regulation of the free flow of non-personal data. But it is of the utmost importance that different stakeholders can go further, in particular in the field of cybersecurity, by applying concepts such as «Digital Sovereignty».

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The answer to these challenges will be more successful if the different States make joint efforts. The ties between Germany and Portugal must be strengthened in this regard. Only an inclusive answer allows full enjoyment of the benefits inherent in the digital transformation process.

1. An answer that covers the different types of companies, based on the qualification of human capital and the application of the knowledge created.
2. An answer that involves the articulation between the public initiative, the private sector and the associative movement.

We are all called upon to participate in the definition of this answer!

Thank you very much!