

Message to the Portuguese Community in South Africa, 23rd December 2021

Dear Portuguese Friends in South Africa,

Looking back into 2021, this wasn't the year we had would have wished. We started with COVID19 and we're finishing with COVID19, having learnt in the meantime Greek Alphabet letters that we'd have done without. For sure, vaccination started and has been generally accessible to all in South Africa – but not all have let themselves be vaccinated. And with the new variant, the precaution measures have become even more important, as the virus is now even more contagious. Having recently recovered from the experience, I can assure everyone that that's not something you'd wish to a friend. I therefore appeal to our compatriots in South Africa to heed the established precautionary measures and to make sure that everybody does get vaccinated.

We remain under the effect of the pandemic, either for cherished ones that may have gotten sick or may even have left us, or for the economic impact that linger on. We are aware of situations of deprivation and, sometimes, of blind and criminal violence. Especially, we had the riots in July in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal that have shocked the whole country, sending to the world images of a land being looted and going up in flames.

However, from that experience came also signals of solidarity, mutual help, resistance and resilience from civil society, including the Portuguese in this country. With the new Social Attaché at the Embassy and with our consular structure, I visited some of the looted Portuguese establishments and we have been accompanying their recovery efforts. That capacity to gather strength from adversity is a great source of pride and an inspiration from our compatriots here.

More broadly, I'm also inspired by the democratic response given by the South African People to the riots in July with the peaceful and civic conduct of the municipal elections in November. As President Ramaphosa said, "the People has spoken" – it must be listened to.

Despite the obvious difficulties, I start from those inspiring elements to look at the times ahead, in the expectation that they'll be better than the year that is now closing. Trusting in this and speaking also on behalf of the team that I'm proud to lead and that serves the Portuguese community in this great country, I wish to leave here to all Portuguese and Portuguese descendants and our South African friends, our best wishes for a Happy Christmas and all successes in the New Year.

Pretoria, 23rd December 2021

*Manuel Carvalho
Ambassador of Portugal
In South Africa*