Discurso LAC-The Stone Soup Leadership Institute's Cronkite Ocean Awards • 2026

Good evening.

Secretary of State Salvador Malheiro,

Ms Marianne Larned, Founding Director of the Stone Soup Leadership Institute,
Distinguished members of the Clube Naval de Cascais,

Dear Blue Economy Youth Ambassadors,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to begin with a small confession. When I was told that tonight we would be honouring an engineer whose doctoral work focused on internal combustion engines and that the ceremony would take place at a sailing club, I must admit I was slightly concerned. In this house, the only engine anyone truly respects is the wind. *[pausa]*

Then I remembered that I am an engineer myself, and that engineers are, after all, simply people who find a way to make things move forward. Secretary of State, I am pleased to report that this is precisely what you have been doing for the sea. So the members of the Clube Naval may rest assured: tonight, we are all under sail.

On behalf of the Mayor of Cascais, Nuno Piteira Lopes, and of the entire Municipal Executive, it is a great honour to welcome you to Cascais.

Cascais has always lived facing the Atlantic. We were a fishing village long before we were a destination. It was from this very bay that King Carlos I set out on the oceanographic campaigns that made him one of the pioneers of marine science. The sea is not our backdrop; it is our identity.

And the sea is certainly our future. Portugal holds one of the largest maritime areas in Europe, and the blue economy, from ports and shipbuilding to aquaculture, ocean energy, marine biotechnology and nautical sports, is today one of the most promising engines of our development. Looking around this room, I see that blue economy in person: port authorities and shipyards, algae producers and renewable energy, ocean finance, science and international organisations. In Cascais, from our fishing harbour to this very club, we know that a healthy ocean and a thriving economy are two sides of the same coin.

This year, that identity carries an added responsibility. In 2026, Cascais is the European Capital of Democracy: the third city to hold this title, after Barcelona and Vienna, chosen by international experts and by more than 4,500 European citizen jurors. It is a distinction we receive with pride, fifty years after the first free local elections in Portugal, and one we understand above all as a commitment.

It is therefore especially meaningful to host an award that bears the name of Walter Cronkite. For decades, he was the most trusted voice in American journalism, and he

reminded us every evening that democracy depends on citizens who are well informed. He was also, as many of you know, a passionate sailor who loved the ocean deeply.

Democracy and the ocean have more in common than we might think. Both belong to everyone. Both require participation, transparency and a sense of shared responsibility. And both can only be protected if we listen, to fishermen and scientists, to entrepreneurs and, very particularly, to young people.

This brings me to our honoree.

Secretary of State Salvador Malheiro is a man who knows, from long experience as a mayor, that good decisions are made close to the people they affect. Since June 2025, he has brought that same conviction to a portfolio that, for the first time, unites Fisheries and Maritime Affairs under a single Secretariat of State.

His approach can be summed up in a simple idea: deeds, not announcements. Under his leadership, the works on the fish markets of Sagres, Vila Real de Santo António and Sines have been completed, and seven Blue Hub facilities are now operating along our coastline, bringing innovation, research and enterprise closer to maritime communities. This is the blue economy at its best: knowledge that becomes jobs, and jobs that stay in our coastal towns.

He has also shown that sustainability and prosperity are not opposing forces. Between 2024 and 2025, Portuguese fishermen landed less fish and yet generated more income. In other words, Portugal is learning to fish better, rather than simply to fish more. At the same time, he has defended, in Brussels, the renewal of our fishing fleet and the specific character of Portugal's small-scale fisheries, insisting that once we have taken good care of our marine resources, it is time to take good care of the people who depend on them.

Secretary of State, you once said that you see in the sea, and in its sustainable governance, a path towards peace. In a year when Cascais celebrates democracy, and in a world marked by so much tension, I can think of no better reason to honour you.

On behalf of the Municipality of Cascais, please accept our warmest congratulations. Our thanks also go to Marianne Larned and the Stone Soup Leadership Institute for bringing the Cronkite Ocean Awards to Portugal, and to the Clube Naval de Cascais for its generous hospitality.

So allow me to close not with a conclusion, but with an invitation. To the companies in this room: invest in the ocean as you would in your most valuable asset, because it is. To our scientists and public institutions: keep turning knowledge into decisions. To our Blue Economy Youth Ambassadors, whose manifesto we will hear in a few moments: do not wait to be invited to the table; you already have a seat at it.

And to every one of us: let us leave Cascais tonight with at least one concrete commitment to the sea, however small. Cascais, European Capital of Democracy, stands ready to be your partner.

Walter Cronkite closed every broadcast with the words: *"And that's the way it is."* Tonight, let us make a different promise to the ocean: *this is the way it will be* because together, we chose to make it so.

Thank you very much.