

**CONFERENCE OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE  
GOVERNMENT**

***“IN THE INTEREST OF SPAIN:  
ENGAGEMENT AND FOREIGN POLICY”***

**Museo del Prado, 16 June 2008**

Dear Kofi Annan, Ministers, Ambassadors, ladies and gentlemen,

In the first place, I would like to thank the Instituto Elcano, the Cidob, the FRIDE, the ICEI and the INCIPE are Spanish centres of excellence whose aim is to reflect in depth about the world and about the role of our country in the world. I would like to thank you for having invited me to present the main guidelines of my Government in the area of foreign policy.

I would like to thank, in particular, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his speech and for his presence, which, as everyone knows, is highly meaningful. His leadership in the United Nations and his ethics, his defence of the rule of law have been and still are a permanent inspiration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe in engagement as far as foreign policy is concerned. Engagement with the values shared by most members of the Spanish society and engagement with the scenarios where our presence can be relevant.

I am convinced that such foreign policy is the best one in order to defend our interests as a country; the interests of a growing world power that plays a strategic role in this multi-polar world; the interests of a nation whose relevance in the International Community will grow if we are able to prove our capacity, through dialogue and persuasion, our relevance as link between nations, cultures and rich and poor countries.

I believe in the foreign policy of a liberal Government, a foreign policy conceived and implemented as a State policy, that is, a policy conceived to serve Spanish society as a whole; not just conceived *for* Spanish society, but conceived and implemented *with* Spanish society; that is, taking the public and private agents into account.

I believe in a foreign policy in consonance with the one that we have been implementing since our Transition, in consonance with an essential continuity that strengthens us as a country, reflecting the willingness of the majority in Spain, generation after generation.

Thus, I believe in a *natural, vocational* policy, both European and Europeist, a wide-scope historic fate that makes us feel at ease if we are able to make the Union move in the right direction.

I believe in a natural, vocational foreign policy concerning Latin America, contributing to the democratic consolidation, to progress and to the regional institutionalisation of the Latin American Community.

I believe in a foreign policy based upon an intelligent, respectful complicity with our neighbours, especially with Morocco, a foreign policy beyond regional limits that may serve to build up a relationship with the U.S.A., strengthening our common ties, which are many and which are always the most relevant thing, for they lay beneath the friendly, honest understanding between our countries.

We could say that these are the 'traditional' guidelines of the foreign policy of democratic Spain, which I intend to keep up and reinforce. But, then, the changes we have been through have made us develop and enhance other lines of foreign action that had already been undertaken during the previous Legislature.

A new era involves a renewed emphasis on our values and new scenarios to prove these values.

Thus, I believe in the convenience of our growing responsibility in the Mediterranean, in the steadfast approach to Africa and Asia and in a greater involvement in the organisations and in the initiatives

that contribute to the rationalisation of international governability, namely, the United Nations and the actions it promotes.

I believe in a foreign policy that reflects, clearly, the challenges that Spain is facing right now. I want to achieve projection into the future, both in Spain and abroad. And a shared notion of national identity. Because, after thirty years of successful democracy, Spain has fulfilled its collective hopes and it has joined the most developed nations of Europe, of the whole planet. And now we can aim at new goals and leaderships.

I believe in a foreign policy whereby Spain may become a synonym of solidarity, justice and humanity all over the world.

Thus, I believe that foreign policies must be the main concern of the Government and they must be permanently supported by the President.

Therefore, over the next few years I intend to keep on assuming the main responsibility to set up the goals and to shape our foreign policy in this Legislature, which in spite of financial difficulties, which are our priority, will make things easier. I believe in this, honest; and this is a good chance to express my willingness.

My speech will be divided into three main parts. In the first place, I will refer to those challenges that, in my opinion, are more important as far as international governability is concerned, those challenges that make it necessary for Spain to implement an engaged foreign policy.

Next, I will go into another great challenge that, given its specificity, deserves to be dealt with separately: the need to contribute efficiently to our economic growth and to promote the governability of globalisation through our foreign policy, becoming aware of the relevance of Spanish investments all over the world.

Finally, I will analyse the scenarios of Spanish foreign policy.

In the first place, I would like to talk about the current challenges of international governability. In my opinion, there are four and these are, in order of priority: the fight against poverty, the promotion of peace versus insecurity and terrorism, the fight against extreme poverty all over the world, the well-organised management of migration and climatic change and energy.

## **The fight against poverty**

The fight against poverty, extreme poverty, hunger and disease, which affect millions of persons all over the planet, is no longer a relatively secondary concern of the great international agents; it has become one of the main matters in the international agenda.

This latent anxiety in the international conscience has become an ethical duty. An issue that time before would have given way to punctual conflicts is now perceived as a structural factor of progressive instability.

Spain feels highly involved in this change in the moral and political paradigm as far as the fight against poverty is concerned; and we assume it entirely, as we are fully aware of it, and we assume this compromise. We are facing a great challenge to the solidarity of nations, a great challenge to our human dignity, a challenge that we can face; a challenge that is the very cause of the objective all developed countries intend to achieve, namely, devoting 0.7% of our Gross Internal Product to Aid for Development. An objective that is shared by Spain, an objective that is shared by the Government, an objective that is shared by society, an engaged, responsible society, an objective that we will attain, just as we did in the case of the aid

for development, which we doubled over the last four years, reaching 0.5% of Spain's Gross Domestic Product.

Meeting the Millennium Objectives is and will always be one of the main axes of the actions of the Government. We will devote 50% of our aid for development to this from 2009 onwards, 50% of our aid for development.

Two weeks ago, during the FAO Conference, I undertook to host a High-Level Conference in Spain, next autumn, to deal with the food crisis and to continue with the tasks that we undertook to fulfil during the meeting in Rome, assuming specific compromises, more specific compromises, just like Spain, in order to face this great challenge.

Even in spite of the current situation, developed countries must increase their investment in cooperation and coordinate their efforts efficiently.

## **The construction of peace**

The second challenge that Spain feels ready to face is the construction of peace.

The world must be governed through coordination and agreements in order to build up a long-lasting, fair peace. *"Preserve the generations to come from the scourge of war"*, this was stipulated by the UN Charter.

But nowadays the battle is being fought not only by regular armies, but also by forces that are halfway between guerrilla, terrorism and organised crime. Conflicts affect the civilian population mainly: nine out of ten casualties all over the world are civilians.

We need new means in order to face the new conflicts and their causes. The new governability guidelines we need in order to promote peace demand a global vision of human security; they demand the action of strong democratic nations, engaged States concerned with human rights and a watchful, active International Community, able to help those weak States that aren't even able to exert a minimum control over their territories.

We have seen this recently, in Somalia and in different parts of Africa. Thus, our country is present in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Afghanistan and in Lebanon, where our soldiers are paying a high price, as we saw yesterday. And we will remain there. In the name of our partners, in the name of peace and security and in our name.

When the conflict is caused by the *spread of hatred*, the means we have prove to be insufficient. We need new answers. Such as the Alliance of Civilisations, an initiative that was supported by the United Nations and by the European Union and that has recently received the support of the general Secretary of the NATO and the support of the countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

During this Legislature we will focus on reinforcing the important task of the High Representative, Jorge Sampaio. We will also promote the National Plans –some ten countries have already implemented them- in order to set up legal measures to enhance understanding and dialogue and to prevent intolerance.

I will just give one example today: the Balkans, one of the areas that have suffered the most serious consequences of new conflicts. We and Prime Ministers Erdogan, Tadic and Karamanlis are working together in order to achieve this. Because the National Plans of the Alliance of Civilisations in Turkey, Serbia, Greece and Spain, and those that are being elaborated by other countries in that region, namely, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, can be a good instrument of constructive, preventive diplomacy.

We will not defeat international terrorism, which has hit us so hard, which we suffered in Madrid last 11 of March 2004, if we keep approaching it as if it was a war. It takes national decisions and firmness but also international coordination. Spain's contribution can be very useful, for we are one of the most efficient countries in the fight against terrorism and our efficiency issues from respect, which is the only way to be efficient: respect to the Rule of Law and to international legality.

In the global architecture of security, regional organisations must keep playing an essential role. And, in my opinion, the NATO is still, almost 60 years after its foundation, a necessary, valuable alliance, because it is built upon sound values that we all share.

## **The well-organised management of migrations**

Nearly two million Spanish citizens live outside our frontiers. I have explained our migration policy to different audiences, yet, they are the ones that support more intensely the vision of Spain as a country that is open to those who, according to our law, can be offered a job and good living conditions.

Migrations demand an effort to set up dialogue, cooperation and agreed governability. In my opinion, there aren't enough instances of joint work in the international community.

So far, we have started to share our policies, trying to build up a common European policy, which in Europe started out back in 2005, promoted, mainly, by our country. We should bear in mind that when we set up the normalisation process, the European frame did not exist and that it was promoted by Spain, mainly.

Both in Europe and in the United Nations, Spain focuses on this task, defending lines of action that were implemented in our country long ago.

In the first place, in order to guarantee cooperation with the countries of origin and with those that serve as a corridor for migration, from a global point of view, as this is the first step to implement a good management of migratory flows.

In the second place, to promote the fight against clandestine emigration mafias, which threaten immigrants and the countries where they operate.

In the third place, to guarantee the protection of national borders against illegal immigration as well as expulsion and repatriation.

Finally, to set up efficient systems to protect migrants and refugees, favouring their integration.

According to these premises, after my first journey to Africa in this legislature, I intend to summon - together with President Wade, President of Senegal, and with the Community of West African States - a high-level regional meeting to deal with the economic context, agriculture, infrastructures, migratory flows, institutional development and reinforcement, regional integration and energy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

## **Climatic change and energy**

The costs of climatic change for international economy could be very high, according to the Stern Report, between 5% and 20% of the Gross Domestic Product; but as far as human lives are concerned, these costs are even higher. We face the challenge to turn this into a chance to change and transform things, to move towards a

sustainable model of economic and social growth, sustainable as far as the environment, health and social welfare are concerned.

Our priority is to meet the compromises undertaken by Spain in the Kyoto Protocol, supporting renewable energy and saving in connection with energy efficiency.

Developed economies must help growing countries to adapt to the risks issued from climatic change. Spain will increase its contribution to help the most vulnerable countries mitigate and adapt to climatic change.

Spain is going to promote the creation of an International Agency on Renewable Energies. Next 30 of June I will travel to Denmark, a country that has fostered an outstanding progress in the area of renewable energies. And I have already agreed with Prime Minister Rasmussen that this visit will focus on renewable energies, which comes to prove the joint compromise of our countries. Thus, I intend to turn Spain into a leader in the area of renewable energies.

As you all know, uncontrolled globalisation, instability in the Middle East and speculation are giving rise to serious distortions in the area of energy, which demand measures to guarantee security as far as energy is concerned, not just guaranteeing supplies but guaranteeing supplies at reasonable prices.

I held a meeting this afternoon with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, the greatest world producer of oil, and I met the President of Mexico, the other great producer, last week. I have also talked about this with President Sarkozy and we have agreed to set up joint initiatives and efforts within the EU context.

It is time to work for a sensible foreign policy, in order to reduce the political risks. Thus, I hereby repeat that the crisis with Iran must be solved with decision but through dialogue. Similarly, we will also

insist on setting up a dialogue with the great Latin American producers so that energy may become a factor of integration.

We will also reinforce our own energy production, by firmly supporting renewable energies and the interconnections with our neighbours. And we will diversify our supplies, which is why we have been negotiating with Algeria, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bolivia over the last few weeks.

## **Economy**

Foreign policy must also focus on economy. Progressively.

International economy has gone through a period of economic growth. But during that period it has also accumulated a serious global financial unbalance. Liquidity has favoured the development of financial markets and products that are progressively more sophisticated, of risks that cannot be faced, of exaggerate benefit expectations and it has given rise to the creation of dangerous “financial bubbles”. And the price of oil, of certain raw materials and food are increasing amazingly.

The consequence is a lesser growth, a greater inflation, more inequality and what’s even more serious; one hundred million people could be on the verge of hunger and malnutrition all over the world.

We are facing the first financial breakdown of globalisation and only a few people doubt about the fact that the international financial system needs to be readjusted.

We want to establish an exchange between peers versus selfish protectionism. We want to build up bridges and knock down the barriers. We want to adapt and we can adapt the Welfare State to the new circumstances, while trying to achieve our aims, instead of

implementing social reductions. We want clear, efficient rules so that the market may develop its potential without breaking the principles of transparency, equity and justice, instead of deregulation.

No country, no matter how big, can face these challenges alone. In order to govern globalisation we must set up agreements, define strategies and prepare global instruments.

In the EU, we want to lead initiatives in order to reinforce and adapt the current multilateral institutions, when necessary, in order to achieve these aims.

Thus, we want to contribute to govern globalisation through our foreign policy but we also want to support our companies through our foreign policy. Because Spain has become the third international investor after the United States and France, the third international investor! Because our economic growth plays a growing relevant role abroad. Because if we are facing financial difficulties, we must pay attention to the different opportunities, mainly abroad.

Spanish companies have grown solid in certain sectors, and we wouldn't have even dreamt of this just a few years ago. They are leaders in renewable energy, desalinisation, telecommunications, the financial sector, tourism or transport and we want to reinforce their leadership.

We have enough margin of manoeuvre to improve the exporting capacity of our companies and I hereby undertake to introduce new measures in order to do it, in order to open up new markets, in order to consolidate their international projection, in order to achieve the most ambitious set of investment protection agreements in our history and in order to promote greater legal guarantees.

We are also working to bring direct investments to Spain –including the sovereign funds- by setting up a dialogue with investors and by

using transparency to give an attractive, solid image of our economy.

I would also like to emphasise the relevance of corporate responsibility. Raising corporate awareness about the environment, about gender equality, about the respect of human rights or about the solidarity with developing countries is necessary in order to establish a new model of corporate ethics, which coincides fully with the political guidelines of my Government and which is also present in the Spanish society.

## **Geographical areas**

When dealing with our main interests for certain geographical areas, as far as foreign policy is concerned and considering the results of last week's referendum Ireland – and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and his colleagues dealt with this issue this afternoon -, we must refer to Europe in the first place.

## **Europe**

Europe and Europe.

The results of the referendum in Ireland are no good news, but Spain has certain clear ideas in this regard.

Irish citizens have expressed their opinion democratically and we respect this. This is true. But, in spite of the legal implications of the consequences of the Irish "no" vote to the Treaty of Lisbon, Ireland must understand that this "no" vote to an agreement that was reached after hard, complex negotiations is nothing but a way of restraining most member States' desires to move towards a greater integration in order to be better prepared to face the problems of the 21st century.

Thus, I would like to state my willingness and my desire to keep on moving on, with decision, towards European integration.

This means that we respect the opinion of most Irish citizens, but it also means that the opinion of most Europeans must also be respected; the desire of most Europeans to have a greater Europe must be respected.

Today's news is not Ireland's "no" vote to the referendum. Today's news is that, outside Ireland, most States support it and have ordered us to go ahead, because they understand that it is necessary to build up a greater Europe.

Today, the world needs a stronger Europe. And we must say it bluntly: this strong Europe, the Europe that is able to make efficient decisions and to think of the rest of the world must become an integrated Europe, renouncing to the power of veto and it must admit that certain institutions that will not operate upon national premises, but according to the decisions made by a group of EU representatives, will have the power to make important decisions.

Evidently enough, this situation also compels us to reflect.

Citizens want us to deal with their problems. They expect Europe to bring about solutions and many think that this debate concerning institutions, which has been going on for more than ten years, is somewhat strange and unintelligible. They want the Council, this week, to deal with Ireland's "no" but most of all they want us to deal with their concern about the price of oil and about the price of food, or about the energy problems. I think that the French Presidency will not let institutional issues dominate during the next semester and, in this sense, I will support President Sarkozy.

We are not facing a paralysis of the Union. I am in close contact with the presidents of other member States and we are going to go into this during the European Council next Thursday.

We can still move on together, we need to move on together. I think this is the best for everyone. Thus, I think that it is too soon to carry out a debate about the possible exceptions, about the different speeds or about the different status within the Union, or about reinforced cooperation.

But it is always good to bear in mind that when common policies succeed, citizens understand the meaning of Europe even better. And this is the right moment to implement European policies concerning these big issues, namely the fight against poverty, climatic change, energy or immigration, issues that demand more international governability, inside and outside Europe. And Spain will always be prone to support the big European policies.

As to energy policies, Spain will keep on developing a transparent, efficient European market, characterised by guaranteed supplies and sustainability. In fact, Spain considers that the promotion of interconnections and the homogenization of the great financial sectors are very important to prevent the standing regulations from harming or benefitting different companies.

Europe must also guarantee the safety of citizens and develop the Space of Freedom, Security and Justice. In this sense, we must underline the European compromise in the fight against terrorism, which Spain can feel with gratitude.

It is essential to develop structures and capacities, both at the level of civilian society and at the military level, for the Union to be able to build a safe space. Spanish actions in this area will be characterised by three main elements: the promotion of the creation of a common security and defence policy endowed with the necessary powers,

keeping up the transatlantic ties as expressed in the Atlantic-Pacific Alliance –for we are a firm, engaged member of this alliance- and the promotion of cooperation between the EU and the NATO. I must also mention our compromise with regards to the Spanish Army: in order to guarantee our defence and to contribute to the defence of Europe.

This Europe must be built by everyone, day after day, but Spain will have the chance to assume greater responsibilities during its Presidency, during the first semester of 2010.

During our Presidency we will promote an ambitious programme that will be aimed at developing the great action lines that I have mentioned so far.

But our European policy cannot wait until then and it will not come to an end next 30 of June. We want to be right by those who are growing more in Europe and right by those who want to promote the project for the political union, towards a strong, flexible Europe, able to preserve the common solidarity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

## **Transatlantic relationships**

The United States is the greatest military, financial world power, it is even the greatest cultural power and things will keep on being so for years. Besides, the United States has also realised that it is necessary for it to have allies and to implement a multilateral policy, and this tendency will be more noticeably in the near future, judging by the statements of the two candidates for President, namely Barack Obama and John McCain.

We, Europeans, must contribute to promote this efficient multilateralism whereby Washington will play a central role, and I am

convinced that it will play a central role, both in the fight against the causes and the effects of climatic change and in area of the new International Law.

It is necessary to promote transatlantic relationships and this task will be a priority for the Spanish Presidency of the EU, and we also must develop our bilateral relationships from a position of mutual respect and, sometimes, if necessary, from our different criteria. But we have too many things in common and this cannot be denied: from mutual investments and trade to the Spanish language, for the U.S.A. is becoming the main Spanish-Speaking country. And this must be one of our main objectives at the political, corporate and cultural level over the next few years.

## **Africa and Asia**

I would like to pay attention to two main, structural scenarios as far as our foreign actions are concerned, two scenarios that deserve to be called the axes of Spanish foreign policy: Africa and Asia.

By the Niger River, there is an African saying that goes “the Niger river is big, but it welcomes every single drop of water”. International solidarity with Africa has proved to be great; still, it is not enough. The fight for survival has a different meaning in Africa, but the battle for human dignity is just the same and that battle is being fought at present, especially, in Africa, with Africa.

The best example to encourage Governments to keep implementing this important effort is the fight of Africans, of many African governments and organisations. We should not be patronising with Africa, for many of the initiatives we are working on were born in Africa, in African politics, economy and culture, in development, in the promotion of democracy and human rights.

We will increase our compromises with Africa during this legislature by means of a new Plan Africa, which will operate during the whole Legislature; a greater presence and dialogue, new embassies and trading offices; more aid for cooperation.

I am personally going to promote this task. During this Legislature I will travel through Africa at least on three occasions.

We have decided not to make a policy for Africa, but with Africa. I think that Africans see us as a country that understands them, that understands the serious problems of their continent, their financial problems, death caused by malaria and AIDS, the lack of food and water, the conflicts and the money spent in arms, the bad management and also the indifference and the promises that are made by many agents of the international community although they are never kept up.

Africa and Africans deserve better, they deserve a different future, and I want Spanish society to get deeply involved, to reflect seriously, and to look at Africa with solidarity, responsibility and hope.

I am going to focus on Western Africa. On Equatorial Guinea. Also on the Sahel, where Human Rights are constantly infringed, which has also happened in Darfur, on the instability of Chad, on Al Qaeda... although there is Mali, too, where democracy has managed to overcome in spite of the difficulties.

This takes a collective effort. The priority in Africa at present, apart from the need for food to face the current crisis, is agriculture, supporting agriculture. Initiatives such as the one promoted by Kofi Annan, the so-called "green revolution", are invaluable. But there are also other areas that need to be paid attention to. I know that many Spanish businessmen who are here today share this point of view and Africa will offer progressively better investment opportunities.

It is also important to pay attention to the reflection carried out about the policies implemented by the EU and by the World Trade Organisation, for these could expand on our exporting possibilities in African countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before dealing with Asia, I would like, in the first place, to express my solidarity with the victims of the earthquake in Sichuan, which I already did, on behalf of Spanish society, during my telephone conversation with the Prime Minister of this country Wen Jiabao last Wednesday.

But Asia is big and our approach is positive. This continent is one of the main political and financial centres. If Spain wants to be a really global country, if we don't want to miss the chance to join international economy, we must turn to Asia, and perhaps we are already a bit late for this.

Our priorities will be the great economies, namely, China, India, Japan, Southern Korea, Singapore or Indonesia; the countries that need international cooperation, namely, Vietnam, Cambodia or Timor; and also those countries that need special attention at the political level, namely, Afghanistan and Pakistan. We will also pay attention to those countries with which we have been historically linked, namely, the Philippines. Or with the Pacific region, where we are carrying out very important trading and investment projects in Australia and New Zealand, two countries that we are approaching progressively.

I intend to visit Asia on three occasions during this Legislature. We are already making the new Asia-Pacific Plan, which will be more ambitious and will promote our presence in Asia, and I will lead this task, in which the whole Government will get involved, and I am sure

that both civilians and administrations will get involved in this task too.

## **The Mediterranean and the Arab world**

The Mediterranean comprises an important part of our history, of our present and -mainly- of our future.

We must thank President Sarkozy for his proposal of a debate about the necessary reform of the Barcelona process.

The fifteenth anniversary of the Barcelona Conference will be held in 2010 and that will be the best moment to carry out detached reflection. We must put forward ambitious proposals at that meeting.

Some of the main international challenges, namely, energy, immigration or terrorism have been and still are present in that area. Besides, this area is projected into the future; these countries feel Europe as part of that future.

We should focus on four main axes in the Mediterranean.

In the first place, I am working with President Buteflika on a proposal that we will put forward to our partners in the Barcelona Process–Mediterranean Union in order to promote the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Charter on Energy and Climatic Change.

In the second place, Presidents Mubarak, Sarkozy and I are going to present an initiative to create a specific cooperation frame in the area of food safety.

In the third place, and this is a priority in my opinion: education. The percentages of illiteracy in certain Southern countries amount to

40% and to 60% in the case of women. These harsh figures reflect the tragedy of a collective failure.

Thus, together with Morocco, thanks to the firm support of King Mohamed VI and to my own support, we are going to propose a reform in the social, cultural and educational fields in the Euro-Mediterranean area, paying special attention to the education of women, in order to reduce the aforementioned figures dramatically and faster than expected in the Millennium Objectives.

In the fourth place, I think that the current European budgetary structure does not match the challenges and expectations in that region. Thus, I am going to propose a considerable expansion of that structure. This is why I am in constant contact with Presidents Sarkozy and Socrates, with Prime Minister Berlusconi –with whom I held a meeting a few days ago in Rome- and with Prime Minister Karamanlis, whom I will visit next month.

This task will be reinforced by our intense contact with the Maghreb countries and with the Middle East, where I will also travel in order to build up closer relationships, not just bilateral relationships, for Spain can also contribute to bring peace to that region and to build up a Palestine State that may live in peace with a safe State of Israel.

Morocco and Algeria also deserve to be mentioned. I will also work in order to harmonise their positions, to keep on strengthening our good relationships and to contribute to the solution of the Sahara question; I will also approach Tunis, Mauritania and Libya.

Ladies and gentlemen,

## **Latin America**

Half of our spirit has been forged in America.

I will not talk about my journeys in Latin America, for a part of my own self is permanently there. But I will tell you that I will make several journeys to that area, for I would like to travel through this region in this Legislature. I will pay special attention to the Latin American summits, as we have the privilege to have the help of His Majesty the King, who plays an essential role in these summits.

Latin America is the continent of the future. We just need to have a look at the political presence and at the economic growth of this area over the last few years. I trust the present and the future possibilities of Latin America, and this makes my country feel even more proud of belonging to a background that we have shared for centuries.

In fact, during this Legislature we will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the first Independence Declarations in Latin America. This is a good chance to reflect together about the meaning of a period that came to an end and to the one that started at that time. We face the challenge of turning those essentially national celebrations into a Latin American, joint celebration; this is our main challenge in fact.

During my recent meetings with Latin American leaders I have verified the interest in the processes of regional and sub-regional integration and the willingness to consolidate their relationships with the European Union. The central axis of this approach could be the establishment of a general consensus between Europe and Latin America about three main axes: social cohesion and investment and energy, in particular; the Latin American citizenship, paying special attention to migrations; and the achievement of association agreements between the European Union and Central America, the Andean Region and MERCOSUR. Thus the Spanish Government will make its best to enhance this rapprochement between the European Union and Latin America, between a continent with a

great future and Europe, which must lead the discovery of new spaces for development and progress.

I hereby announce that next October I will hold two meetings aimed at this: the first one with the Presidents of the Andean region and with the European Union Trade Commissioner, Peter Mandelson, and the second one with the Presidents of Central America.

Given this context and since I am talking about Latin America, I just can't leave aside the question of culture, for it is an essential element if a country is to have international projection.

The evolution of diplomacy and foreign relationships has just confirmed that language and culture are, together with His Majesty the King, our best allies outside our borders. Not just due to the economic relevance of the industry linked to these areas, but also due to their symbolic relevance. 500 million persons think in Spanish and many more use it daily. Our language is still the language of understanding. Spanish is the third international language, the second one chosen by students.

Amazingly enough, a country whose language has spread that far and whose culture is so attractive had never implemented the strategy and the instruments of the so-called "public diplomacy". I think that this question is also of paramount importance and during this Legislature we will change this tendency. The Government will create a Committee for Public Diplomacy, which will be presided over by me and which will be formed by members of the Government and of civilian society, of the mass media, of the world of culture and business, and which will focus on the annual analysis of our projection in the different areas and on the proposal of future lines of action.

Ladies and gentlemen,

## **Human rights and the death penalty**

I would like my Government to speak the language of human rights when dealing with the different challenges that different regions all over the world are facing. The civilian, political and social rights of men and women.

Thus, the Government will approve of a National Plan on Human Rights contemplating different national and international compromises as well as other compromises concerning our foreign policy, as has been announced by the Vice President in the Congress of Deputies.

We will soon implement one of them: our compromise against the death penalty.

In 2007, the General UN Assembly approved of a Directive whereby more than one hundred countries supported the idea of a universal deferment of death penalty. I know that this issue is particularly touching for Kofi Annan.

This initiative cannot be postponed any more. But it has not had the necessary support so far and it must be reinforced.

The Spanish Government has already taken steps so that the International Community may create an International Committee that will focus on the universal abolition of the death penalty by implementing two specific measures:

In the first place, it will implement a deferment of capital punishments that will be in force until 2015.

In the second place, it will definitively establish the prohibition to apply death penalties to people under eighteen or to people who

committed a crime while they were under eighteen and it will extend this prohibition to mentally handicapped people in all countries.

I hereby make a calling for civilians and for those who have led the fight against death penalty, as is the case of International Amnesty or the Global Coalition against Death Penalty, to join this effort, which the Government of Spain will put forward before the Governments of the different countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In my investiture speech I expressed my desire to attain a serene political atmosphere – at least a more tranquil atmosphere than during the previous Legislature - characterised by dialogue and consensus. Among those priorities for consensus I included foreign policy and, in particular, the Spanish Presidency of the European Union in 2010. Foreign policies must be State policies and I would like to state my willingness to achieve this consensus, which will make us stronger as a society and as a country, and which will reinforce the international projection of Spain and its capacity to contribute to a more prosperous and peaceful international society.

Over the last thirty years, Spain has become the eighth economic world power, thanks to the efforts and to the zeal of its citizens.

If this change has made it possible for us to improve our life conditions, it will also guarantee our efficient presence in the world and it will also increase our possibilities to exert an influence upon the decision-making process in the International Community.

This is what we must do both in the traditional and in the new scenarios.

If we become more relevant in Europe, we must get more involved with Africa, Asia and Latin America.

If we are progressively more firmly established among the main countries in the world, we must get more intensely involved in the fight against poverty, in the construction of peace and in the spread of education and culture.

If we demand more freedom and security, we must progressively strengthen the multilateral institutions and the different tools in order to guarantee human rights, to promote gender equality and to spread the values of justice and solidarity of the Rule of Law.

These values are the ones that characterise Spanish society and these are precisely the values that the international community needs right now in order to face the challenges of our time.

This is my vision of Spain and this is the project that we will develop over the next four years in the area of foreign action.

Thank you very much.