



**STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT, HIS EXCELLENCY, MR. JOSE LUIS RODRIGUEZ ZAPATERO, TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SEPTEMBER 2004**

Mr. President,

For the first time, I am addressing the United Nations General Assembly representing my country. Ours is an old and diverse country, with several languages and different traditions and cultures. Ours is a European, Mediterranean and Ibero-American country.

I am speaking on behalf of a country that has had its share of difficult experiences throughout its history. A country in which still living generations have known a civil war, a dictatorship of almost four decades and a democracy that is now 25 years old. We have also experienced the scourge of terrorism for more than thirty years.

Over the last thirty years we, Spanish women and men, have learned much about and from terrorism. We soon learned about its iniquity. We have learned what it is about. We have learned how to defy it, how to withstand its blows with courage and dignity. We have learned how to fight it.

Precisely because of this, because we have been experiencing it for thirty years, we Spaniards deeply sympathised with the suffering of the American people on 9/11. We knew how they felt. We know how they feel. Here in New York I would like to convey the Spanish people's hard felt solidarity with this great American nation.

We fully understand the terrible pain that in these past years has been inflicted upon Jakarta, Bali, Casablanca, Riyadh or Beslan. We know all about enduring kidnappings, bombings and cold-blooded killings. We are well acquainted with the meaning of the word compassion.

On March 11 this year a terrorist attack took the lives of 192 people in Madrid. We had never experienced this kind of terrorism in our country before, but we were familiar with the bloodshed and the pain that it caused. From this platform, I want to express my deep appreciation to all nations for their solidarity, extended to us at a time of such suffering with the brutal events that took place in my country.

Spanish women and men were not afraid. On the very next day after the bombings, millions of people left their homes, took to the streets and squares of the cities and towns of my country and, once again, we expressed our rejection and disgust, our unanimous contempt for terrorist brutality.

From thirty years of terrorism we have learned that the risk of a terrorist victory rises sharply when, in order to fight terror, democracy betrays its fundamental nature, governments curtail civil liberties, put judicial guarantees at risk, or carry out preemptive



military operations. This is what our people have learned: that it is legality, democracy and political means and ways what makes us stronger and them weaker.

We will resist terrorism. Our history endorses our resolve. We will pursue our fight against terrorism. But we will always do so within the framework of both domestic and international legality.

We will do so always respecting Human Rights and our commitment to the United Nations, and in no other way. It is not only the ethics of our beliefs that move us, but also and above all our belief in ethics. Our conviction is that legality, and only legality, will allow us to prevail in the fight against terrorism.

Nothing justifies terrorism. It is irrational, like the Black Death, but the roots of terrorism, like those of the plague, can and must be uncovered. We can and must rationally analyse how it emerges, how it grows, so as to be able to fight it rationally.

Terrorism is insanity and death and, regrettably, there will always be fanatics who are ready to kill to impose their insanity through force. Ready to disseminate the seed of evil. The seed of evil cannot take root when it falls on the rock of justice, well-being, freedom and hope; but it can take root if it lands on the soil of injustice, poverty, humiliation and despair.

Thus, redressing the major political and economic injustices that affect our world would deprive terrorists of their popular support. The more people there are who enjoy dignified conditions around the world, the safer we will all be.

Mr. President,

In this context, I would like to speak about Iraq. But above all I would like to speak about the thousands of victims of this conflict, about the Iraqis and about the soldiers and civilians who lost their lives. We express our permanent solidarity to them and to their countries.

The overwhelming majority of people in Spain spoke out against the war. We were not persuaded by the reasons given by those who promoted the war.

We expressed this view both at the Spanish Parliament and in the streets. We spoke out loudly, we shouted. We also said that winning the war would be much easier than winning the peace. Peace must be our endeavour. An endeavour that requires more courage, more determination and more heroism than the war itself. That is why the Spanish troops returned from Iraq.

In any event, what really matters now is to contribute to restoring the full sovereignty and independence of Iraq, of a democratic Iraq in peace with its neighbours. We will spare no effort to achieve this goal. Because of this, Spain actively participated in the elaboration of Resolution 1546 and will continue to give political and financial support



to the process of political normalisation and to the strengthening of democratic institutions in Iraq.

Mr. President,

There will not be either security or stability in the world as long as the Middle East conflict continues to bleed. This conflict is the primary tumour for many sources of instability.

Spain firmly supports the resolutions adopted by the United Nations on this issue, as well as other instruments such as the Quartet's Road Map, which is yet to be implemented. And the time we are wasting is to be measured in terms of the loss of human lives.

Spain stands by Israel against the terrible scourge of terrorism, which it is entitled to defend itself against by legitimate means. Spain strongly advocates the establishment of a viable, democratic Palestinian State that can live in peace and security with the State of Israel. Israel will be able to count on the international community to the extent that it respects international law; but the layout of the dividing wall fails to do this.

Spain commits itself to spare no political, diplomatic or cooperation effort to try and bring about the peace that is so necessary in the Middle East. But it also wants to address an urgent appeal to the United States, to the European Union, to Russia and to the United Nations to implement the Road Map. These are four powerful players, which we want to see exercising decisive diplomatic pressure.

Mr. President,

In the humanitarian field, Spain has contributed several million euros to help alleviate the terrible crisis in Darfur. However, the Sudanese authorities must, without delay, take all measures necessary to end the atrocities, bring the perpetrators to trial and normalize the situation in the region. It is also necessary that the rebel groups and militias respect the cease-fire and show a constructive attitude at the negotiating table. In this context, we must support the initiatives launched by the African Union.

Mr. President,

Spain considers that we can no longer passively accept the continuation of Africa's forgotten conflicts, which is why, along with our partners in the European Union, we have supported the establishment of the Peace Facility for Africa, an instrument designed to promote regional solutions to the crises suffered by the continent.

Mr. President,

In the Maghreb, Spain is pursuing an active and comprehensive policy to enhance political stability and economic and social development in the region. Regional integration and interdependence with Spain and Europe is, we believe, the way to achieve these goals.

Regarding the Western Sahara, Spain vigorously supports the pursuit of a just and definitive political solution that is acceptable to all parties and respects the principles set



out in the Resolutions of this Organisation. From this platform, I would like to call upon the international community to redouble its efforts, within the framework of dialogue and negotiations established by the United Nations, to resolve a conflict that has dragged on for far too long.

Mr. President,

I would also like to reiterate Spain's commitment to peacekeeping operations, which are a fundamental part of the effective multilateralism we are seeking to promote. Our political commitment has already been reflected through specific contributions in the form of military contingents for Afghanistan and Haiti, in accordance with express Security Council mandates.

Peace and security will only spread over the world with the strength of international legality, with the strength of human rights, with the strength of democracy, of abidance by the law. With the strength of equality: equality between women and men, equal opportunities, no matter where people are born. With the strength of our rejection against those who manipulate or want to impose any kind of religion or belief. With the strength of education and culture: culture is always peace; let us ensure that our perception of others is coloured with respect. With the strength of dialogue among peoples.

Thus, in my capacity as representative of a country created and enriched by diverse cultures, before this Assembly I want to propose an Alliance of Civilizations between the Western and the Arab and Muslim worlds. Some years ago a wall collapsed. We must now prevent hatred and incomprehension from building a new wall. Spain wants to submit to the Secretary General, whose work at the head of this organization we firmly support, the possibility of establishing a High Level Group to push forward this initiative.

Mr. President,

This is the house of Nations, but I only see women and men. I only hear the voices of women and men who represent billions of women and men. And many of these voices - often feeble, barely audible, voices of children, weak, without hope - come from poverty-stricken lands, plagued with inequality.

It is them who I want to address now to declare that Spain endorses the Millennium Declaration objectives as regards development, poverty eradication and preservation of the environment. Poverty is the main cause of uncontrolled migration flows. Let us be certain that no wall, however tall, will prevent those who endure extreme poverty from trying to escape and pursue their dignity as human beings.

For all these reasons, we are firmly committed to the political Declaration we adopted yesterday in the framework of the Alliance against Hunger and Poverty - promoted by President Lula of Brazil - which envisages new funding mechanisms for development. The government of Spain will substantially increase its official development assistance, in order to reach the threshold of 0.7% of GDP.



Mr. President,

To ensure peace, security and hope all over the world, international instruments for the promotion and protection of human rights need to be strengthened and effectively implemented. This is one of the basic pillars of our foreign policy. Our objectives are the signing and ratification of the optional protocol to the Convention against Torture; the universal abolition of the death penalty; the fight against discrimination of women and gender violence; an end to discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation; the protection of children and the fight against exploitation and abuse suffered by children; the strict observance of human rights in the fight against terrorism and crime.

World peace and security cannot be ensured without respect for legality. Therefore, Spain wishes to promote the effective functioning of the International Criminal Court. To that end, I would call upon all States who have yet to ratify the ICC Statute to do so fully, unconditionally and without delay, and thus help us in our common endeavour to build a more just world.

My government wholeheartedly supports the United Nations reform process established in the Millennium Declaration and endorses the Secretary General's initiatives for the reform and institutional strengthening of the Organization.

Spain believes that, for the future of the international order, it is essential that this reform be aimed at ensuring effective compliance with the United Nations resolutions, in particular with those coming from the Security Council.

The representativeness, democratization, effectiveness and transparency of the Security Council must all be strengthened. To this end, Spain is willing to consider new proposals that can allow building a consensus on increasing the number of nonpermanent members as well as on the use of the right to veto.

Mr. President,

I want to reaffirm here Spain's commitment to the just causes of the Latin American peoples, by consolidating democratic systems and bringing political stability to the region. I also wish to reconfirm our support for Latin America's economic progress aimed to reducing inequality and strengthening social cohesion. Within the European Union, we will continue to promote a closer relationship with this region through the development of a strategic partnership between both sides of the Atlantic.

Mr. President,

I would not wish to conclude my statement without reference to Gibraltar. Every year the General Assembly reiterates its mandates urging Spain and the United Kingdom to pursue bilateral negotiations in order to reach a definitive solution to this dispute. I want to confirm here that my country will maintain its willingness to negotiate a solution that benefits the region as a whole, and to hear the voice of this non-autonomous territory.

Mr. President,

The United Nations was born out of necessity and ideals. It was built by women and men who asserted their faith in the understanding among peoples and cultures. They left us



Utopia as a legacy. They thought that every goal was within their reach: settling old conflicts, eradicating poverty, ensuring rights for every human being; and today we could ask ourselves: what is within our reach? Almost everything.

True, human kind's history does not provide us with many reasons to be optimistic. Nor does the world of today offer us many reasons to feel superior to the women and men that preceded us. One third of the countries that exist in the world does not enjoy a system of liberties. Torture continues to exist. There are more than thirty conflicts around the world today. Half of the war victims are children. Five million people are suffering from A.I.D.S. One billion human beings subsist with less than one dollar a day. More than eight hundred million adults are illiterate. More than one hundred and fifty million children do not have access to any sort of education. More than one billion people are deprived of drinking water. No, we human beings cannot feel very proud of ourselves today.

We definitely need to change this. We, the Spanish women and men of today, are resolved to make it possible for those who come after us to be able to say: "Yes, they did it!"

I thank you very much, Mr. President.

