

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF SPAIN, MR JOSÉ LUIS RODRÍGUEZ ZAPATERO, TO THE OPENING SESSION OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL OF THE ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)

ENGLISH  
Original: SPANISH

Madrid, 29 November 2007

-----

Ministers, Heads of Delegation, Mr Secretary General, representatives of OSCE institutions, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great honour and deep satisfaction to welcome you to the capital of Spain for the formal opening of the 15<sup>th</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council. I hope you feel very much at home in Madrid, a city which has a long historical commitment to freedom and which attracts people from all corners of Spain as well as from all the continents, origins, races, languages and cultures of the world. A cosmopolitan city, open to understanding, which hosted the second meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe - the forerunner of the OSCE - between 1981 and 1983

Just as then, all of us who meet under the OSCE banner are guided by the transforming force of dialogue and an active desire for consensus, two elements which are indispensable if we wish to confront a reality as complex as the current one. A reality which, if it is to become an opportunity for prosperity, security and progress, calls for a collective horizon which we will achieve only if we pursue the path of effective multilateralism, consensus and strict adherence to international law.

These very principles guide Spain's foreign policy and inform our national priorities: the United Nations, Europe, solidarity, cooperation, and our singular relations with Latin America and our Mediterranean neighbours. These same principles have also inspired Spain's actions during its Chairmanship of the OSCE.

Based on our conviction that international peace and security are attainable goals, we are propelled to increase the coherence and effectiveness of the international system, an objective to which - under the global leadership of the United Nations - the OSCE contributes as a Regional Agreement in the sense of Chapter VIII of the Charter.

The force of international law, advances in freedoms, equality and the deepening of solidarity and sustainability are just some of the challenges, and at the same time opportunities, underlying a strengthened and updated system of international relations served by the OSCE and to which the 56 participating States and cooperation partners contribute.

Ladies and gentlemen

Spain has brought to the OSCE Chairmanship the vitality of Spanish society and the example of the far-reaching social, economic and cultural advances which have been achieved by our democracy in a very short time thanks to our commitment to freedom, equality, social cohesion and desire to live together in peace and in freedom. This, above all else, has been Spain's success during the past three decades.

Based on the above, Spain's Chairmanship has helped promote a new approach to the three major dimensions underpinning the Organisation's objectives. Interrelating them has enabled us to address the complexity of our cooperation challenges in the areas of security, sustainable development and coexistence.

For years the OSCE has united us in the quest to build a Europe at peace with itself. Our diversity and the operating methodology of this forum do not represent obstacles to progress on cooperation, be it in the Balkans, in resolving 'frozen' conflicts, consolidating security in the OSCE area or strengthening the legal status of the Organisation.

In this regard, the consensus on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe - which has been the cornerstone of our peace, stability and security - needs to be rebuilt.

Together we can also tackle the new threats facing our world and defeat terrorism, the senseless violence from which no country or citizen is safe. Spain has painful experience of terrorism but at the same time we can offer to the world hope based on the confidence that those who use terror to impose their obsessions on everyone else will ultimately be defeated. Although we have suffered like few nations the many forms of terrorism, waged by a wide variety of terrorists, we have also demonstrated the strength of the rule of law in bringing those responsible to justice.

This Organisation necessarily has to cooperate more closely in order to prevent terrorist strikes and the dramatic trail of grief and suffering they leave behind. We want the OSCE to be ambitious in combating terrorism and we support the firm commitment of all the States who are engaged in this battle. We also support greater attention and recognition for the victims of terrorism. The holding of the 1st OSCE Conference on Victims of Terrorism this year represents a decisive step forward in this regard.

Spain is highly appreciative also of the work conducted by the OSCE in studying the links between migration and security, its efforts to combat criminal and people-trafficking networks, and its support for the work of the International Organisation for Migration. Concerning migration, Spain favours progress on a policy grounded on the principles of legality and integration and on combating the mafias behind people-trafficking.

Until just over two decades ago Spain was a country from which people emigrated; today we receive immigrants. This situation gives us our identifying trait as a society. Our experience and sensitivity in regulating migratory flows and demographic challenges have contributed to agreements between the European Union and the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa. For that same reason, Spain has promoted an integrated immigration policy for the European Union and the Euromediterranean region which takes into account the countries of origin, transit and destination, while also addressing the causes and effects of migration through measures for development cooperation, integration and security.

I would also like to underline the importance of the debate taking place within the OSCE on the relationship between security and the environment. It is a debate which the Spanish Chairmanship has fostered because it is appropriate to a concept of global security in which all dimensions are included and linked.

The meeting of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change two weeks ago in Valencia sounded a warning as to the magnitude of the processes triggered by human action and which can and must be mitigated as a matter of urgency.

My Government is committed to sustainable development, to preserving the ecological balance and to measures to halt the effects of climate change; such measures represent also an opportunity for a new generation of economic activities and new sources of employment.

I realise, however, that the phenomenon of climate change, while not excusing actions by States in isolation, requires concerted action by the entire International Community if it is to be tackled effectively. The nature of the challenge means that the content and focus of international relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must inevitably be redefined.

The Spanish Chairmanship has paid special attention to land conservation and decontamination, as well as to sustainable management of water, a resource which is necessary for life and a universal right. My country boasts a long tradition of water management and stands today at the forefront of research and innovation in this field.

Spain wishes to share this heritage and to heighten awareness among the International Community with respect to water use and sustainability. The organisation of the 2008 International Expo on Water and Sustainable Development in Zaragoza, which will be attended by more than one hundred countries, multilateral organisations and civil society, reflects this desire.

Ladies and gentlemen

The histories of the OSCE and modern-day Spain go hand in hand. Our transition to democracy coincided with the renegotiation and signing of the Helsinki Final Act, whose decalogue of principles is still valid today and constitutes the backbone of the Organisation. In exercising the Chairmanship we have contributed our democratic experience to help make the OSCE acquis

more robust, in order to reaffirm its authentic character as a permanent forum for dialogue.

Here, in this Organisation, we discuss proposals to address the challenges of our time on the basis of respect for sensitivities, forms of thinking and diverse traditions, in order to come together on common values.

The Conferences on Antisemitism in Bucharest and on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims in Cordoba have served to deepen the OSCE's human dimension and adopt measures against exclusive and xenophobic manifestations in conventional and technological public spaces.

As the author Juan Goytisolo has said, intercultural dialogue has become the purpose that justifies the existence of our civilisation and guarantees global coexistence. This indeed is the goal of the Alliance of Civilisations which I proposed to the UN General Assembly in September 2004; sponsored since then by Turkey and Spain, this initiative has been taken up by the United Nations and will see the first Alliance Forum take place in Madrid in January.

The Alliance seeks to manage diversity and reinforce global security by fostering mutual respect and understanding among cultures. The OSCE can make a significant and valuable contribution to this initiative through its human dimension.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The OSCE offers an unquestionably valuable tool for building a Eurasian space of shared peace and prosperity; an area of dialogue and multilateral cooperation across the Atlantic which allows us to tackle the major challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century together. Our geopolitical space is changing and so too must our organisation. For these reasons, Spain accepted the commitment, the challenge, of the Chairmanship which now draws to its close and will continue to give its active support to the indispensable work of the OSCE.

Constructive political dialogue leads to consensus and hence the importance of this OSCE Ministerial meeting, which is the scenario for political dialogue between the participating States and cooperation partners, as well as a forum in which to share the concerns and aspirations of our civil societies. This Ministerial Conference should serve to map out the road which we will follow together and also to set the pace of our progress.

I would like to wish the OSCE Ministerial Conference in Madrid great success. Success will represent a triumph for each and every one of the participating States. It will also facilitate the work of the incoming Finnish Chairmanship, to whom I would like to offer Spain's collaboration and which I am confident will achieve promising progress.

I am convinced that in your endeavours here you will all find the harmonious voice of consensus. A voice which is necessary to enable us to face our common future with greater certainty and meet our expectations. I am equally

convinced that Madrid, Spain, is a good place to engage in dialogue, to understand each other to look towards a shared future.

Thank you.

.