In Spain’s interest: A Committed Foreign Policy

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero*

An address by the Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero at the Prado Museum (Madrid) on 16 June 2008 organised by the Elcano Royal Institute, with the collaboration of the following Spanish institutions: CIDOB Foundation, FRIDE, ICEI and INCIPE.

Prado Museum, 16 June 2008

Dear Kofi Annan, Ministers, Ambassadors and friends:

The Elcano Royal Institute, Cidob, FRIDE, ICEI and INCipe are outstanding Spanish think-tanks that address global affairs in depth and Spain’s role in the world. Let me express my appreciation for their having invited me to outline my government’s foreign policy.

I would like to give special thanks to Kofi Annan for his remarks, but above all for his presence, which is clearly rich in symbolism. His leadership at the United Nations and firm ethics have been and continue to be a permanent source of inspiration.

Friends,

I believe in a foreign policy that is committed: committed to the values professed by the majority of the Spanish people and to the scenarios where our presence can be useful.

It is my conviction that a foreign policy conceived in this way is the best one for defending the interests of our country; the interests of a medium-sized power which holds a unique, strategic role in today’s multi-polar world; the interests of a nation destined to play a growing role in the international community if, through dialogue and the power of persuasion, it knows how to use its position as a bridge between regions and cultures, between rich and poor.

I advocate the foreign policy of a progressive government, but one conceived and implemented as a policy of State, that is, as a policy that serves Spanish society as a whole. And by this I mean a policy not just for Spanish society but designed and carried out with it; in other words, working with as many public and private sector forces as possible.

I believe in a foreign policy that stems from the one developed since Spain’s transition to democracy; in a basic line of continuity which strengthens us as a country and reflects the broadly shared will of successive generations of Spaniards.

*Prime Minister of Spain.
So I believe in a foreign policy that is naturally and vocationally European and pro-European, a calling that is for us historic and long-ranging and that makes us feel comfortable and useful when we know how to push the Union in the right direction.

In a foreign policy that is naturally and vocationally Iberoamerican and which contributes to the consolidation of democracy, to progress and to the regional institutionalisation of the community of Iberoamerican countries.

In a foreign policy with an intelligent and respectful complicity with our neighbours, one with a scope that transcends the regional to build a relationship with the United States that strengthens all of that which unites us reciprocally, which is a lot, which is overall the most significant and which is a reason for friendly and sincere recognition between the two countries.

These are the ‘classic’ vectors of democratic Spain’s foreign policy, which I aim to maintain and strengthen. But along with them, the changes that we are witnessing prompt us to develop and promote other lines of overseas action that began under our first term in power.

New times mean a new emphasis on the values we profess and new scenarios in which to defend them.

Therefore, I believe it is fitting for us to exercise more responsibility in the Mediterranean region, to continue opening up to Africa and Asia and to commit ourselves even more to the organisations and initiatives which help rationalise international governance, in particular the United Nations and the actions it promotes.

I believe in a foreign policy that clearly reflects the challenges that Spain has taken on. I want to achieve an internal and external projection of the same shared look towards the future. And of a single consciousness as a country. Because after 30 years of very fruitful democratic evolution, Spain has achieved its collective aspiration of taking its place quite naturally alongside the most developed countries of Europe and the whole world. And now we can set new goals for ourselves and new kinds of leadership.

I believe in a foreign policy in which Spain's name is synonymous with solidarity, justice and humanity throughout the world.

Therefore, I cannot help but believe in a foreign policy which is a top priority for government action and driven constantly by its Prime Minister.

In the next few years, I thus plan to keep taking the main responsibility for charting the path of our foreign policy and articulating it. And I will do so in a mandate in which, despite the economic difficulties that we face, and which call for preferential attention, will make this task easier than in the previous legislature. That is what I believe, and this is a good opportunity to make it clear.

I will divide my remarks into three parts. First, I will address what I feel are the most important challenges facing international governance, and that require from Spain this committed foreign policy.
Then I will address a great challenge which, given its specific nature, merits separate treatment: the need for our foreign policy to contribute efficiently to our economic growth and that helps to manage the process of globalisation, given the importance that Spanish investment around the world has taken on.

And finally, in line with the earlier sections, I will review the different scenarios of Spain’s foreign policy.

So, first of all, let us look at the major challenges of international governance. I feel there are four of them: the fight against poverty, promoting peace in the face of insecurity and terrorism, the orderly management of migratory flows, and climate change and energy.

**The fight against poverty**

The fight against poverty, hunger and disease, problems that affect so many millions of people in many parts of the world, has gone from being a relatively secondary issue for the world’s main players to one that requires being placed calling at the top of the international agenda.

What had merely been a background noise on the world’s conscience has now become an ethical imperative with the consequences that entails. What had been a potential source of localised conflict is increasingly being perceived as a factor of structural instability.

Spain is acutely aware it cannot remain on the sidelines of this change in the moral and political paradigm, and is fully committed to addressing it. We face the formidable challenge of showing solidarity towards other peoples, which is at the heart of our goal of earmarking 0.7% of GDP to development aid by the end of this mandate. It is not just the objective of the government, but rather of all of Spanish society, made up of concerned, responsible citizens.

Fulfilment of the Millennium Goals is and will continue to be a top priority of this Government. Starting in 2009, we will devote at least 50% of our development aid to it.

Two weeks ago, at the WFO conference, I made the commitment that Spain would host in the autumn a high-level conference on the food crisis, the idea being to follow up on the Rome meeting and make specific commitments.

Even in the current circumstances, developed countries cannot but increase their development aid and coordinate their efforts efficiently.

**Building peace**

The second challenge to which Spain is totally committed: building peace.

The world needs more government, more coordination and more agreement in the building of a just and lasting peace. ‘To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war’, reads the United Nations Charter.
But today it is not just regular armies that face each other on the battlefield, but rather forces that are a hybrid between guerrillas, terrorism and organised crime. Today, armed conflict mainly affects the civilian population: nine of 10 fatalities in it are civilians.

We need new tools to deal with new conflicts and their causes. The new rules of governance that we need in order to promote peace efficiently require a global view of human security, and they need strong democracies, States which are committed to human rights and an international community which is watchful and active with regard to weak states that can barely control their territories.

We have seen this recently in Somalia and other parts of Africa. For this reason we are also present in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan and Lebanon where, as they did yesterday, our soldiers pay a high price. This is why we will stay there. For our partners, for peace and security, for ourselves.

When the source of a conflict is the proliferation of hatred, the available tools are not enough. We need new responses. Like the Alliance of Civilizations, embraced by the United Nations and the European Union, and also recently endorsed by the Secretary General of NATO and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

In this legislature we will make a special effort to enhance the important work being done by the High Representative, Jorge Sampaio. And to encourage national plans –some 10 countries now have them– to instil government action and legislation with measures that foster understanding and avert violence.

I shall only cite today one example: the Balkans, one of the areas most punished by the new kind of conflict. We are working jointly in this direction with Prime Ministers Erdogan, Tadic and Karamanlis. Because the national plans stemming from the Alliance of Civilizations in Turkey, Serbia, Greece and Spain, along with those being developed by other countries in the region, such as Rumania, Bulgaria and Albania, can be an excellent tool for constructive and preventive diplomacy.

We will not defeat international terrorism, which is hitting the world so hard and which we suffered in Madrid on 11 March 2004, if we treat it like a war. We need internal conviction and firmness but certainly we also need international coordination. Spain’s contribution can be very useful because we are one of the most efficient countries in this struggle and we act in the only way that can in fact be efficient: respecting the rule of law and international legality.

In the global architecture of security, regional organisations must continue to play an important role. I feel NATO, which is about to mark its 60th anniversary, is a necessary and valuable alliance because it rests on the very solid values that we share.

**Orderly management of migratory flows**

Nearly two million of our compatriots still live outside Spain. Of the various forums in which I have had to explain our immigration policy, it is these people who express the strongest support for the vision of Spain as a country willing to take in those who, under Spanish law, can be offered work and decent living conditions.
The immigration phenomenon requires a great effort in dialogue and concerted governance. And in my opinion there are still not enough structures for working together on this in the international community.

For the time being all we see is a fledgling effort to harmonise policies and an attempt to build a common EU policy. The latter started in 2005, largely through pressure from Spain. It is often forgotten that when we began the process of normalisation, that European framework did not exist and that Spain was the main driving force behind it.

In Europe and the United Nations, Spain is working hard on this issue, defending lines of action that are already firmly consolidated in our country.

In the first place, it is working to ensure cooperation between countries of origin and of transit with a global approach.

Secondly, Spain is working to toughen the fight on criminal gangs that smuggle human beings, the main threat not only for emigrants but also for the countries where these groups operate.

Third, Spain wants to protect its borders from illegal immigration and the prospect of having to expel and repatriate people.

Finally, our country wants to establish efficient systems for protecting displaced persons and refugees and favouring their integration into society.

In line with these premises, after my first tour of Africa during this term, I plan to join President Wade of Senegal and the West African Community in convening a high-level regional meeting to address the issues of the economy, agriculture, infrastructure, migratory flows, development, the strengthening of institutions, regional integration and energy.

**Climate change and energy**

The Stern report says that climate change could cost the world economy between 5% and 20% of its GDP. The toll is infinitely higher in terms of human lives. The challenge is to convert this task into an opportunity for change, working towards a model of economic and social growth that is sustainable with the environment, health and living standards.

I assign top priority to fulfilling Spain’s commitment under the Kyoto Protocol, relying on renewable sources of energy and savings linked to energy efficiency. This has been enshrined in the Spanish Strategy on Climate Change and Clean Energy.

Wealthy countries should help developing countries adapt to the risks stemming from climate change. Spain will earmark a greater percentage of its development aid for the most vulnerable countries to mitigate the effects of climate change and adapt to it.

Spain is going to push for the creation of an International Agency for Renewable Energies. On 30 June I will travel to Denmark. I have agreed with Prime Minister Rasmussen that the visit will focus on renewable energies, showing the joint commitment of our two countries.
Unbridled globalisation, instability in the Middle East and speculation are causing great distortions in the energy sector. These require energy security measures, not just in terms of guaranteeing supplies, but also supplies at reasonable prices.

This afternoon I met with the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, the world’s largest oil producer, as I did last week with the President of Mexico, another major producer. I also addressed the issue with President Sarkozy, with whom we agreed to seek joint initiatives.

It is time to work with a sensible foreign policy in order to reduce the risk of geopolitical conflicts. For this reason, I reiterate that the crisis with Iran should be resolved with firmness but through dialogue. At the same time we shall continue to engage in dialogue with the major Latin American producers in order to make energy a source of integration.

We will strengthen our own energy production through our commitment to renewable energies and grid connections with neighbouring countries. And we will diversify our supply, and for this reason we have made substantial progress in negotiations with Algeria, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bolivia.

The economy

Foreign policy is also an economic issue. And it will be increasingly so.

The international economy has experienced a good phase of growth. But during this period serious economic imbalances on a global scale have also accumulated. The abundance of liquidity has favoured the development of increasingly sophisticated markets and financial products, unassumable risks, exaggerated expectations of profit and the creation of dangerous ‘financial bubbles’. And the prices of oil, other raw materials and some foodstuffs are growing in a spectacular way.

The consequence is less growth, more inflation, greater inequality and 100 million people once again facing hunger and malnutrition.

What we are witnessing is the first economic fracture in the process of globalisation, and few people doubt that the international financial system needs to be adjusted in the way it works.

Rather than selfish protectionism, we support trade on a level playing field. Rather than barriers, we want bridges. Unlike those who believe in cutting social spending, we want to—and can—adapt the welfare state to suit new circumstances, but without renouncing its goals. Rather than deregulation, we want clear and efficient rules so that the market will develop its potential without violating the principles of equity and justice.

No country, no matter how large it may be, can face these challenges on its own. In order to manage globalisation, we must build consensus, define strategies and prepare tools at a global level.

Within the European Union we want to lead initiatives and adapt, when necessary, the current framework of multilateral institutions to make them serve these objectives.
So we want to manage globalisation with our foreign policy but also use it to support our companies. Because Spain has become the world’s third-largest investor, behind only the United States and France. Because our economic growth depends to an increasing extent on overseas activities. Because if we are going through hard economic times, we must take advantage of all opportunities, also abroad.

In some sectors Spanish companies have acquired a solidity that we could not even have imagined a few years ago. They are leaders in renewable energies, desalination, telecommunications, the financial sector, tourism and transport concessions, and we want to strengthen this leadership.

There is room to improve our companies' export capacity, and I have made a pledge to introduce measures to enhance it, open new markets, consolidate our internationalisation, complete the most ambitious series of investment-protection agreements in our history and encourage greater legal security.

We are also working to attract direct investment to Spain –including sovereign funds– through dialogue with investors and with transparency, and to project an attractive and solid image of our economy.

I also want to stress the importance of corporate social responsibility. Business awareness of the environment, gender equality, respect for human rights and solidarity with developing countries to give rise to a new model of business ethics fully coincide with the political guidelines driving my Government.

I will address all of these issues in detail on 23 June at an event similar to this one, on the government's economic initiatives.

Geographical areas

When it comes to addressing our overseas interests by geographical areas, one must begin with Europe, even more so after the Irish referendum of last week.

- Europe
The result of the Irish referendum is certainly not good news, but Spain confronts it with certain clear ideas.

The people of Ireland have expressed themselves in a democratic way, which we respect. This is true. However, regardless of any legal considerations on the consequences of the Irish rejection of the Lisbon Treaty, Ireland must understand that its ‘no’ to an agreement reached after long and complex negotiations cannot simply halt the desire of the vast majority of member states to move towards a greater degree of integration in order to be in a better position to confront the challenges of the 21st century.

Therefore, I want to begin by stating my will and desire to continue moving decidedly towards European integration.

This means being aware that we respect the majority opinion of the Irish people, but it also means that the decision of most Europeans of wanting more Europe must also be respected.
The news today is not that the referendum in Ireland failed. The news is that, outside Ireland, millions of people supported it and have given us a mandate to keep moving forwards because they feel that what is needed is more Europe.

Today, the whole world needs a stronger Europe. And we must say it clearly: that a strong Europe, the Europe which is capable of making decisions efficiently and making a difference in the world, must be an integrated Europe, one that renounces the right to veto and admits that some institutions, which will not work on the basis of national representation, will be able to make important decisions.

But the situation that has emerged calls for some reflection.

People want us to debate their problems. They expect Europe to provide solutions, and for many this debate on institutions which has been under way for more than 10 years is something distant and sometimes unintelligible. They expect that at this week's summit we will discuss the Irish ‘no’ but that mainly we will address their legitimate worries about fuel and food prices. I also think the French presidency of the EU will try not to let institutional questions dominate the six months, and in this regard President Sarkozy will have my support.

The European Union is not paralysed. For the past few days I have been in close contact with my colleagues from other member states and will speak in more detail at the European summit next Thursday.

It is still possible to move forwards together. I think so, and I think it is best for everyone. Therefore, I think it is premature to talk about possible exceptions, different speeds or statuses within the Union, or enhanced cooperation.

But it is good to keep in mind that when common policies succeed, people understand better what Europe means. And this is a time when we need European policies on major issues, such as the fight against poverty, climate change, energy and immigration, which require more international governance, both inside and outside Europe. And Spain will always be prepared to move ahead on major European policies.

With regard to energy policy, Spain is going to keep working to develop a European market that is more transparent and efficient, with supply security and sustainability. For Spain it is particularly important to promote interconnections and the harmonising of the major economic players so that uniform rules do not benefit or harm different companies.

Europe must also guarantee the safety of its citizens and make progress in developing security, freedom and justice. In this realm, Europe’s commitment to fighting terrorism should be highlighted.

It is essential to go deeper in developing structures and capabilities, both civilian and military, with which the European Union can act. Three goals will guide Spanish policy: to push for the creation of a common security and defence policy with the necessary capabilities; maintaining the transatlantic link that is NATO, of which we are a firm and committed member; and encouraging cooperation between the EU and NATO. To this I will add our commitment to the Spanish Armed Forces in order to guarantee our defence and contribute to the defence of Europe.
This Europe is being built by all day by day, but in Spain’s case we will have the opportunity to take on greater responsibilities when we assume the EU presidency in the first half of 2010.

In our presidency we will implement an ambitious program whose goals will include developing these broad policy areas I have outlined in this speech.

But our European policy cannot wait until then, nor will it be exhausted on 30 June of that year. Starting right now, we want to be with those who believe most in Europe and want to advance the project for political union, moving towards a Europe that is strong and flexible and preserves EU solidarity.

- **Transatlantic relations**

The United States is the world’s greatest power in military and economic –and even cultural– terms, and will continue to be so for many years. At the same time, the United States has also realised that it is essential to have allies and a multilateral policy, a trend that will only grow in the near future, judging by the comments of both of the presidential candidates, Barack Obama and John McCain.

All of us, and in especially we Europeans, must help encourage an efficient multilateralism in which Washington plays a central role. And I am convinced it is going to have such a role, both with regard to the fight against the causes and effects of climate change and in the new international law.

We must foster transatlantic relations, and this will be a priority for Spain’s EU presidency, in addition to developing our bilateral relations, through mutual respect and, sometimes, despite differing criteria. But there are too many things in common to give them up: from reciprocal investment and trade to the Spanish language, as the United States is fast becoming the country with the largest number of Spanish-speakers.

- **Africa and Asia**

I would like to address two areas that I now feel have such a high-priority and are so essential to our activities overseas that I would even call them the new pillars of Spanish foreign policy: Africa and Asia.

There is an African proverb from the banks of the Niger River that says ‘the river is big, but it always needs a drop of water’. The international aid effort for Africa is large, but not enough. The fight for survival in Africa has a different meaning than in other places, but the battle for human dignity is the same. And that battle is being waged especially in Africa, and with Africa.

The best example to follow in this important effort is the struggle being waged by Africans themselves, by many of their governments and organisations. We must not view the continent from a paternalistic point of view, since many of the initiatives in which we can cooperate originate in Africa, in the political, economic and cultural realms, in development and in the development of democracy and human rights.
Our commitment to Africa is to be strengthened during this legislature: with a new Africa Plan spanning the entire term of Parliament; a greater presence and dialogue with the opening of embassies and commercial offices; a cooperation effort we will earmark greater resources to.

I shall encourage this work personally, and during this legislature I will make at least three trips to African countries.

We have decided to engage in a policy not for Africa, or towards Africa, but rather with Africa. I think Africans perceive us as a country that understands them, that understands the continent’s grave problems: economic problems, daily deaths from diseases like malaria and AIDS, lack of food and water, armed conflicts and spending on weapons, bad government, and also indifference and broken promises by many parties in the international community.

Africa and its people deserve another lot in life, another fate, and I want Spanish society to become more fully involved, to think more and view Africa with solidarity, responsibility and hope.

I shall concentrate this effort on West Africa. In Equatorial Guinea, and also in the Sahel region, where we are concerned about violations of human rights, as in Darfur, instability in Chad, the presence of al-Qaida… although there are also cases like Mali where democracy has prevailed, despite difficulties.

This must be a collective effort. Today the most urgent task is to develop the agricultural sector. But we need to work in other areas as well. I know many of the Spanish business leaders who are here share this vision, and in Africa there are also good investment possibilities.

It is also important to think about what policies the EU and the WTO could follow to enhance African countries’ ability to export.

Looking to Asia, I first want to express solidarity with the victims of the earthquake in Szechuan, as I did in the conversation I held last Wednesday on behalf of all the Spanish people with Prime Minister Wen Jiabao.

But as we look to Asia we see much more than this, and we see it in a very positive light. The continent is an important centre of gravity in both political and economic terms. If our country wants to be truly global, if it does not want to miss out on the global economy, it must get involved in Asia, where we have arrived relatively late.

Our priorities will not just be the major economies like China, India, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Indonesia, or countries that need international aid, such as Vietnam, Cambodia and East Timor, but also ones that need special attention, like Afghanistan and Pakistan. We will also focus on countries with which we have historical ties, such as the Philippines, and the Pacific region, where very important projects are being carried out in two countries that are increasingly close to us, Australia and New Zealand.

During this legislature I plan to make three trips to Asia. We are now preparing a new Asia-Pacific Plan that will be more ambitious about our projection in Asia. I will be at the
foreground of this task, in which the entire government will be involved, as I am sure civil society and other local and regional governments will be as well.

- The Mediterranean and the Arab world

The Mediterranean holds a very important part of our history, our presence and above all, our future.

We should thank President Sarkozy for encouraging the necessary debate on reforming the Barcelona process.

In 2010 we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Barcelona Conference, and it will be a good time to reflect with a sense of perspective. We must go into it with ambitious proposals.

Some of the great international challenges such as energy, immigration and terrorism, have had or still have a significant presence in this area of the world. At the same time, it is an area that is looking to the future; they are countries that see Europe as part of that future.

We should work along four lines.

First, I am working with President Bouteflika on a proposal that we will present to our partners in the Barcelona Process-Mediterranean Union to push for a Euro-Mediterranean Charter on Energy and Climate Change.

Secondly, Presidents Mubarak, Sarkozy and I are going to propose an initiative for a specific framework for cooperation in the area of food supplies.

Third, we will focus on education, an area I view as a top priority. Illiteracy rates in some of the countries of the southern rim of the Mediterranean basin are as high as 40%, and 60% for women. Those cold, dry numbers reflect the tragedy of a collective failure.

Therefore, along with Morocco and with the strong support of King Mohamed VI and myself, we are going to propose a reform in the Euro-Mediterranean socio-cultural and educational sector, with a specific focus on education and women. The idea is to allow a larger and faster drop in the illiteracy rates than those forecasted in the framework of the Millennium Goals.

Fourth, I think the current European budget framework is not up to the challenges we face in the region and the optimism with which we should address them. Therefore, I will propose a significant increase. I am in regular contact with Presidents Sarkozy and Sócrates, with Prime Minister Berlusconi –whom I recently met in Rome– and with Prime Minister Karamanlis, whom I shall visit next month.

This work will be enhanced through our intense contacts with the countries of the Maghreb region and the Middle East, where I will also travel and seek closer relations, looking not only at bilateral ties but also at the contribution that Spain can make to the search for peace in the region and in the construction of a Palestinian state that can exist in peace alongside Israel.
Morocco and Algeria deserve a special mention. I will also work to bring them closer together and contribute to a solution to the Western Sahara issue, as I will with Tunisia, Mauritania and Libya.

- **Iberoamerica**

Half of what we are was forged in America.

I will not talk about trips to Latin America because part of me is always there. But I will say that I will plan to keep up a strong pace of visits because I would like to take in the whole region. I will pay special attention to the Iberoamerican summits, in which we have the privilege of the presence of His Majesty the King, whose role in the summits is essential.

Iberoamerica is the continent of the future. All we need to do is consider the political presence and economic might that the region has gained in recent years. I have infinite confidence in the present and future possibilities of Latin America, and this enhances my country’s pride in being part of this shared area for centuries.

It is precisely during this legislature that we will see the 200th anniversary of the first declarations of independence in Latin America. This provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the periods that ended and that began at that point. One of our challenges is to transform these celebrations, which are essentially local, into Iberoamerican events in which we are present in a spirit of solidarity.

In my recent contacts with Latin American leaders, I have noted an interest in processes with sub-regional and regional integration processes, and a firm will to consolidate relations with the European Union. The pillar of this rapprochement could be the construction of a broad EU-Latin American consensus based on three elements: social cohesion and investment, with issues such as energy as factors for social development and integration; Iberoamerican citizenship with special attention to immigration issues; and the completion of association agreements between the European Union and Central America, the Andean region and MERCOSUR. I will give my utmost to bringing together the European Union and Latin America.

I can tell you now that in October I will hold two meetings to this end: the first, with Presidents of the Andean region and the EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson, and the second with the Presidents of Central America.

Dear Friends,

In this scenario, and as we are speaking of Iberoamerica, I cannot neglect the issue of culture, an essential element for any country that wants to matter in the world.

The evolution of diplomacy and foreign relations has only confirmed that language and culture, along with his Majesty the King, are our best ambassadors outside our borders. Not only because of the economic importance of the industries linked to these two spheres, but also for their symbolic relevance. Some 500 million people think in Spanish and many use it as they go about their day-to-day activities. Our language continues to be one of understanding. Spanish is now the world’s third most spoken language, and the second most frequently studied.
It is surprising that a country with such a widespread language and attractive culture has not had until now what we call a strategy and tools for ‘public diplomacy’. I feel this is an issue of great importance, and in this legislature shall change this situation. The Government is going to create a Public Diplomacy Commission, with myself as Chairman. It will feature members of the Government, civil society, the media and the world of culture and business, and each year will analyse Spain’s projection in all areas and propose future strategies.

Human rights and the death penalty

I want my Government to speak the language of human rights in the face of all of today’s challenges and in all the world’s regions. I mean civil, political and social rights of all men and women.

For this reason, by the end of the year the Government will approve a National Human Rights Plan with different domestic commitments and others for our actions overseas.

We will undertake one of them immediately: a commitment to oppose the death penalty.

In 2007 the UN General Assembly passed a resolution in which more than 100 countries called for a universal moratorium on capital punishment. I know I am speaking of something that is close to the heart of Kofi Annan.

This is an initiative that requires immediate action. But it has not been received the way it should have and needs to be strengthened.

The Spanish Government has already taken steps with the International community to create an International Commission that will work towards the universal abolition of the death penalty through two specific measures.

First, through the application of an effective moratorium on executions until 2015.

Secondly, to reach a conclusive and definitive agreement under which no country of the world will apply the death penalty to minors or people who committed crimes when they were minors; the ban will be extended to include the mentally disabled.

I take this opportunity to urge civil society, to those who have stood out most in the fight against the death penalty, such as Amnesty International and the Global Coalition against the Death Penalty, to join us in this effort.

In the speech I made upon being sworn in for a second term, I expressed a desire to create a calm political climate characterised by dialogue and consensus. Among the issues that I said should take top priority in this consensus, I included foreign policy, and more specifically the Spanish presidency of the EU in 2010. Foreign policy is an issue of the utmost importance for the State. And I would like to reiterate here my desire to achieve this consensus, which will make us stronger as a society and as a country. It will also strengthen Spain’s action overseas and its ability to contribute to an international society that is more prosperous and peaceful.
Dear friends,

In the past 30 years, through the effort and will of its citizens, Spain has managed to become the world’s eighth-largest economy.

While this progress has allowed us to improve our living standards, it should also let us guarantee our effective presence in the world and enhance our ability to influence decision-making in the international community.

We should do this in traditional scenarios, but also in new ones.

As our weight in Europe is constantly growing, we should become increasingly involved in Africa, Asia and Ibero-America.

As we increasingly take our place among the world’s leading countries, we should commit ourselves more intensely to fight poverty, build peace and spread education and culture.

As we seek more freedom and security, we should strengthen multilateral institutions and the tools we use to guarantee human rights, promote gender equality and spread the values of justice and solidarity that are inherent to the rule of law.

These are the values that characterise Spanish society and the ones the international community needs now to face the challenges of our times.

This is my idea of Spain in the world.

Thank you.