

Speech of the President of the Government before the UN General Assembly

New York, Thursday, 24 September 2009

Dear President,

Scarcely more than one year ago we faced, with great uncertainty, the fall of some of the financial titans of the richest countries in the world and that financial crack brought about a world economic crisis we are still facing, in spite of the recent signs of recovery. We discovered then, with great cruelty too, that we did not have the necessary norms and rules to prevent something that was already happening in the global financial system, in spite of the fact that it was something global, already. And now, after the G-20 Summits in Washington and London, we have set up the grounds to provide a solution, but we still need to culminate the process in Pittsburgh.

This has not been the first crisis of globalisation –in spite of what has been said-; instead it has been the first crisis of global governance, the crisis of an insufficiently governed globalisation; and it is up to us to profit from the opportunity and learn the lesson, of course, as far as the financial and economic crisis is concerned, but also as far as the rest of the global challenges are concerned, for this demands a collective decision and also the necessary instruments for a multilateral coordinated political action.

Because, moreover, these challenges are interrelated. We cannot intend to achieve economic and social development if we lack the adequate peace and security conditions both for our nations and for our citizens. And the contrary is also true: durable peace and security are not possible without development, without sustainable development.

Thus, this willingness to become jointly responsible about the problems and the solutions, a willingness that has revived strongly over the last few months is what should help us to find an answer to the conflicts and threats that world peace and security must still face. This should help us to succeed in the fight against hunger and extreme poverty. This should help us to keep up our commitment and fight the effects of climatic change or fight organized crime, terrorism or piracy. Thus, this is a great opportunity for us.

Right here, right now, during this general debate of the United Nations, one year after the financial crack, which almost destroyed welfare in the most developed countries and the possibility for many other countries to try to attain welfare; here, dear President, I would like to claim that Spain is committed with multilateralism, with the need to keep on articulating a global governance system; and it is also committed with each of the challenges I have just mentioned.

But before going through those challenges I would like to say that multilateralism is not just a procedure to adopt decisions and solve conflicts at an international level. It is that, sure, but, for multilateralism to be effective and long-lasting it also – or rather first of all – demands two material premises.

In the first place, multilateralism goes hand in hand with the faithful observance of democratic values, human rights and the de facto equality between men and women in the world. I am highly satisfied, with regards to this issue, with the last Resolution passed by the General Assembly, which will make it possible for a single entity to deal with all issues concerning gender.

But right now, the stern defence of democracy has a name and is represented by a country: Honduras. It is there that our Latin American brothers, who had witnessed the consolidation of democracy and of the welfare prospects over the last few years, have decided – with the support of Spain and of the International Community – to win this battle, the battle of Honduras. We are not going to accept an antidemocratic coup d'état and democracy will be restored in Honduras.

And last, but no least, multilateralism demands a culture or atmosphere based upon dialogue, respect and recognition among countries, regions and –in general- among civilisations.

Five years ago I spoke for the first time before the General Assembly in order to propose the creation of an Alliance of Civilisations in order to favour understanding and cooperation among nations and peoples with different cultures and religions, and so as to face those who promote extremism and put peace in danger.

We can be happy for that initiative has a Group of Friends, whose members keep increasing, reaching more than one hundred at present, including the different associations and organisations and representatives of civil society, which comes to prove that this project is going to keep going on. Furthermore, the fact that the 3rd Forum of the Alliance is going to be held in Rio de Janeiro, next year, comes to prove the universal character of the principles behind it.

Respect for civilisation, culture and tradition diversity is a condition for the efficiency and durability of multilateralism, of the multilateralism we want to strengthen according to the paradigm of human rights and of the universal values we share as responsible members of the International Community.

When five years ago now I put forward the Alliance of Civilisations, from this very platform, we were living a moment that was less favourable than the one we are currently going through. Yesterday, after listening to the President of the United States of America and to other international leaders, I thought: it was worth the effort. Now, the Alliance can use all its potential to serve the efficient multilateralism we want and can implement now. This initiative was worth the effort and it proved to be successful –let me put it this way—for it is now under the auspices of the United Nations, represented by its General Secretary, Ban Ki-Moon, and his predecessor, Kofi Anan.

Spain must feel happy for the President of the General Assembly has proposed the debate to open the new year to deal with the question of efficient answers to global crises: the strengthening of multilateralism and dialogue among civilizations for international peace and development.

Now we must move a step further. The Alliance of Civilisations, which structures and implements those principles and values in the United Nations, should form part, structurally, of its main organs and at all levels. The moment has come for this General Assembly to approve a Resolution to provide the Alliance of Civilisations with that structural dimension. Spain and Turkey and the Friends of the Alliance will work together so that this Resolution may be endorsed before the end of autumn this year. I am sure that it will contribute highly positively to the task that is being developed by organs such as the Human Rights Council, the Economic and Social Council and, even, the Security Council. The dialogue of civilizations must become the mother tongue of the United Nations.

Dear President,

The new multilateralism has been essential to take a few relevant steps in the areas of disarmament and armament control, including the banning of anti-personnel mines and cluster bombs. Now, the world has the chance to take the most important step: the abolition of nuclear weapons.

President Obama has had the courage to raise this subject and the United States and Russia, a country that is and will keep being essential for Euro-Atlantic security, are negotiating the greatest reduction ever for such weapons. We encourage them to do so and we look forward to the summoning of a special Summit of the Security Council on the fight against the spread of nuclear weapons.

Spain, a nation that refused to develop or have nuclear weapons, shares this goal and we will support it with all our might. In the first place, this should make us reinforce the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, whose assessment conference will be held next May 2010, during the Spanish EU Presidency. I hereby undertake to do everything I can, from Spain and from the European Union, so that this important Conference may yield real results in order to move on towards the prospect of a world without nuclear weapons.

Dear President,

We will keep working with determination and zeal in order to build up and consolidate peace at all levels and in all areas. My country feels proud of having contributed over the last twenty years to the peace missions of the United Nations. In these twenty years we have cooperated in twenty two missions, sending more than one hundred and thousand soldiers.

Right now, we share the feeling of uncertainty and the concern about the situation in Afghanistan. Yet, I am sure that the International Community will be able to find a solution, a solution that cannot be, that is not just military. The shared belief in the strategic value of the region and the solidarity among the countries that are present in that region are more powerful than ever and this is going to be of paramount importance to face the existing difficulties.

I would also like to stress the need to persevere and keep searching for peace formulae for the Middle East, given its capacity to irradiate and influence the other regional conflicts, conflicts

such as the one I have just mentioned. The world has to restore peace in the Middle East, with two safe States, the State of Israel and the State of Palestine, which the International Community should recognise in a reasonable time. This has been and still is the main strategic priority for the International Community: peace in the Middle East.

Dear President,

According to the latest estimates, more than one thousand million persons starve all over the world. This is nearly one sixth of the total world population. We must say this as often as possible. This type of data entails deep human suffering and hit our consciences as leaders of the International Community and as citizens too.

It is unfair and unacceptable to enter the 21st century with such a sharp unbalance in the conditions of survival of Mankind. It is unfair, unacceptable and also unsafe; a permanent source of instability. We cannot attempt to create a safer world with the current levels of inequality and poverty in the world.

Thus, our commitment with global peace and safety must go hand in hand with a renewed attempt to eradicate poverty, using our leadership in a responsible, supportive way, and avoiding the temptation –in times of economic crisis- to reduce our degree of commitment with the poor and most vulnerable persons.

Attaining the Millennium Goals must be a central aim in the international agenda. We still have five years to go and by 2015, if we implement a constant collective effort, these Goals can still be attained and in the next General Assembly we must reach specific agreements to guarantee the observance of such goals.

Let me stress the relevance of this peremptory common effort referring to the commitment of my country, of citizens in my country, and referring to Africa, in particular. The 21st century must be the century of a continent that has been long deprived of a role in the history of Mankind: Africa.

Spain has become the seventh international donor and the eighth UN donor, assuming an overt commitment at the level of food safety.

Dear President,

Over the last two years, we have stirred the conscience of Mankind about the serious consequences of climatic change. This awareness is sufficiently spread, the awareness that we have to fight climatic change and also the awareness about the opportunities to found a new model of economic development: a sustainable development.

With climatic change we have passed from the awareness-raising period to the moment of commitment. We need no more words; it is the time of facts, considering the specific circumstances, but moving on together, ready to go on.

We have seen the effects of the economic crisis and we still have to react against the effects of a more devastating phenomenon for the generations to come. It is paradoxical and incomprehensible, even more if we consider that in order to overcome the crisis it is necessary to guarantee the only possible form of development: sustainable development.

We have 75 days to go before the Summit of Copenhagen. 75 days to enter the future or to fail, 75 days for responsibility or for impotence, 75 days to reach an agreement or to set forth a useless pledge in favour of our particular interests.

Copenhagen must provide the world with two answers concerning what and when: an ambitious emission reduction and a close, clear horizon, respectively.

In order to attain those goals we must also think about the how. We know that research, innovation and technological development in the area of energy favour the fight against climatic change. Thus, Spain has proposed each State to devote at least 0.7% of its Gross Domestic Product to Research, Development and Innovation in technology and energy. This is a reference figure which, as has already happened in the case of the cooperation policy, will serve to identify a commitment before the International Community.

Besides, my country intends to promote the agreements we all are obliged to subscribe in Copenhagen during the Spanish EU Presidency, the first semester of 2010.

Dear President,

I am about to conclude. Just one year ago we were hit by a financial crack that was felt in the four corners of the world. During the last few months we have suffered the consequences of

this crisis but we have also become aware of the need to move on and build global governance and we have taken solid steps in this sense.

Let us keep on moving that way and not just to fight the crisis and enhance employment, but also to overcome this crisis together and keep facing the other global challenges successfully.

Let us make the most of this moment for lucidity and of this opportunity. Let us build an efficient, responsible and supportive multilateralism, because since 1945 we had never had the adequate conditions to transfer the desires of the founders of the United Nations to the international community. Those desires were intended for the generations to come and we, our generation, is the first generation that has the chance to implement the old beautiful illustrated dream of a rightly-governed world, a world governed by all. Let us do it.

Thank you very much.