



SPEECH BY
HIS MAJESTY THE KING
AT THE GALA DINNER
OFFERED BY THEIR MAJESTIES
THE EMPEROR AND EMPRESS OF JAPAN

IMPERIAL PALACE
TOKYO, 10 NOVEMBER 2008

Your Majesties,

MAY we thank You for Your welcome and for Your very kind words highlighting the long and fruitful history of friendship between Japan and Spain, and the affection Your Majesties have for so many years shown towards Spain and ourselves.

It fills me with great happiness to return to Japan with the Queen twenty-three years after Your State Visit to Spain and twenty-eight years following our first State Visit to this great country.

The invitation Your Majesties honour us with, and for which we are so grateful, allows us to restate the personal friendship binding us, and to connect anew with this beautiful land we discovered in 1962 and which has always welcomed us so generously.

In two days, one hundred and forty years will have passed since the signing of the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between our two countries, two ancient nations with links that have grown stronger throughout History.

Our personal friendship also goes back several decades. Your Majesty, You have been to Spain at least four times, as many times as the Queen and I have had the fortune to visit Japan.

On these foundations, we return today, inspired by the resolute will of our respective countries to further enrich our excellent relations at a time we might describe as historic, based on an ever-greater mutual understanding grounded in shared values.

We are united by a close political affinity regarding major international affairs, such as the reduction of poverty, the fight against terrorism, energy and climate change, non-proliferation, understanding among cultures and religions, and the strengthening of the international system.

These and other challenges reflect the modern world's imbalances and deficiencies, which require a global approach.

The financial markets pose challenges of uncertain scope, which urgently require enhanced regional and international cooperation.

We are agreed on the need to strengthen a fairer international order, defending peace, security, human rights and international law. Our coordination on questions of mutual interest, both worldwide and regional, is unwavering and effective.

And through dialogue and multilateral diplomacy, we are working for sustainable and balanced development that

is based on democratic values and consistent with the different countries' possibilities and needs.

Hence my great confidence in the joint efforts of our two States, which favour consensus and appropriate undertakings, to the benefit of international society.

Your Majesties,

The year 2009 will mark four hundred years since the time when Spain and Japan shared a first glimpse of "globalisation", when Spanish ships reached the shores of this part of the world.

In the mid-sixteenth century, Saint Francis Xavier, known affectionately in Japan as 'Xavieru', admired the Japanese people, of whom he said "Never before had I met such hardworking, modest and disciplined people."

Since then, Spain has been linked to East Asia through the former Spanish crown territories in the Americas, now sovereign nations with which we maintain profound links of affection and cooperation.

Indeed, for centuries the first known trans-Pacific route, which has left us so many memories, started from New Spain, present-day Mexico.

These memories include the shipwreck of one of the vessels operating on that route, the galleon "San Francisco", off the coast of Iwawada in 1609.

Thanks to Japanese help, virtually all the Spanish crew were saved, bringing cultures, knowledge, techniques and lifestyles, which were then very different, into closer contact.

Longstanding Spanish admiration for Japan extends today to multiple expressions of your culture, such as literature, design, film, cartoons and cuisine, and to the quality of Japanese products.

Japan and Spain must further the development of their political, economic, social and cultural relations, and greater mutual understanding of their respective realities.

In the economic sphere, we are seeking to reduce the trade imbalance with Japan, while at the same time promoting investment in both directions as the most effective instrument for broadening our cooperation.

We are also attracted by Japan as a paradigm of the extent to which training and R&D&I are key factors for ensuring, at this time in particular, the growth of advanced economies like ours.

Greater mutual understanding is also resulting from the current growth in tourism, particularly from Japan to Spain.

Moreover, the humanities and the arts have always been central to the enhancement of our relations. It is therefore a great pleasure for me to be able to open the new headquarters of the Instituto Cervantes in Tokyo during this State Visit.

This will be the largest among Spain's worldwide network of such Centres, thus reflecting the great demand in Japan for both a language shared by nearly five hundred million people and the many cultures which express themselves in Spanish.

I am also pleased to learn that the Government of Japan is considering opening a Japan Foundation office in Spain.

I am certain that all possible assistance will be granted for these two Institutions to enjoy the greatest support in their operation.

It is highly satisfying, moreover, that the latest edition of the Spain-Japan Forum, the eleventh, which was held in Galicia, further contributed to bringing our societies closer together.

The Forum has opened up new paths for collaboration, responding to the interests of many professionals, entrepreneurs, artists, researchers and students, whose work multiplies and strengthens our bilateral ties.

Spain will shortly launch its Third Asia-Pacific Plan, a major initiative, the result of broad consensus, set in motion eight years ago in order to ensure a higher Spanish profile in Asia and likewise for Asia in our country.

We are pleased to see that this new Plan establishes Japan as one of the essential elements of Spain's foreign policy towards Asia and the Pacific during the coming four years.

Your Majesties,

Three years ago, the Prince and Princess of Asturias had the pleasure of visiting the Aichi Expo, where Spain had an outstanding pavilion, the product of one of the single largest cultural investments in our history.

They were particularly grateful for Your Majesties' kindness towards them.

I also wish to express our gratitude for the presence of His Imperial Highness Prince Naruhito at the International Expo in Zaragoza last July, which significantly highlighted the success of the Japanese pavilion, one of the most emblematic and most visited.

I am especially pleased to emphasise that the affection uniting us is continued in the persons of our Crown Princes, unswerving guarantors of the future enhancement of our relations.

Looking forward to that future of greater friendship and cooperation between Japan and Spain, I toast to Your personal good fortune and to that of the entire Imperial Family, as well as to the peace, prosperity and wellbeing of the beloved Japanese Nation.

Thank You very much.