

Director General, dear authorities, distinguished guests,

I am deeply honoured to be here today with you.

“He who reads and walks much, sees and knows even more” stated Miguel de Cervantes. This well-known sentence reminds us of the many ways in which books are at the service of men and make them even better. I would thus like to speak briefly of how books benefit us and how we should like to put those benefits to serve our two nations, Afghanistan and Spain.

Literature and language, the two intangible gifts that these books contain, also express the most valuable thing that we have, for it was the basis for the creation of our nation. 1492 is said to be the year when modern Spain was born because on that very year America was discovered and the first Spanish grammar in history was published by Antonio de Nebrija. What made us a nation is awarded to you today, for you to cherish and to share.

Secondly, a written word allows us to have material proof of a shared culture and language. In this regard, let me thank specifically the Spanish department and Ms Wahlizada for the exceptional work, through new projects of Spanish classes with the Institute of Diplomatic Studies and the National Defence University Marshall Fahim.

Thirdly, books and the institution of a library hold a very important place for freedom. Miguel de Unamuno said that there is freedom in reading, for the less one reads, the greater the danger of what we read. A collection of books and a library are a space for learning and debating freely.

Fourthly, we all share an imaginative horizon through books. Jorge Luis Borges described books as an extension of the human body, because it allowed us to imagine. Words allow this and future generations of students in the University of Kabul to continue to imagine and write a bright and inclusive future for your country.

Above all, books have a function of making us better people, through a shared moral and values. Saint Augustine said that “When we pray we talk to God, but when we read it is God who talks with us”.

The Embassy of Spain in Kabul should like to thank the Ministry of Defence of Spain for helping us to transport these books. We should also like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan for its institutional support. The Embassy should like to thank Complutense University of Madrid and, specially, Eugenio Luján, Dean of the Faculty of Philology, for his initiative and facilitation of this donation. Lastly, we should like to thank warmly the University of Kabul for receiving these books. It is an honour to have them welcomed to the University of Kabul, which already holds thousands of volumes. Thank you for the privilege of making a tangible contribution to this representation of Spanish history, culture and learning for the people of Afghanistan. Let us and your student become the people who read and walk much, and therefore see and know even more, as stated Miguel de Cervantes

Thank you.

PAULA SÁNCHEZ DÍAZ, E.N.a.i.