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INTERVENCIÓN DEL MINISTRO EN LA INAUGURACIÓN DEL XXII FORO ESPAÑA-ESTADOS UNIDOS

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Good evening,

President of the US-Spain Council, Senator Tim Kaine

Governor of Virginia, Mr. Terry McAuliffe,

President of the Spain-US Council Foundation, Mr. José Manuel Entrecanales,

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are celebrating once again this United States-Spain Forum, its twenty-second edition. It is with great pride and satisfaction that I am here today with you, representing the government of Spain. I have the honour of conveying H.H. the King's greetings and wishes for success. H.H. has frequently attended these fora, thereby expressing the Crown's greatest interest in strengthening the relations between our two countries.

I thank senator Tim Kaine and his team for the warm welcome on this first day of the forum. It is a great honour to address this distinguished gathering of entrepreneurs and representatives of important institutions from both countries. Twenty-two consecutive fora are a good demonstration of the mutual interest that this dialogue awakens in both the U.S. and Spain.

Last year, the Forum was hosted in the historical city of Santiago de Compostela, whose road forged the creation of Europe. Today we find ourselves on this other side of the Atlantic, in Williamsburg, in whose assembly, the "Virginia House of Burgesses", and in its halls of "William and Mary College", the United States was also shaped. We also do not forget that this state was a pioneer in the fight for the freedoms of this nation. Some of its most enlightened children, the so-called Virginian Presidents, have contributed towards elevating the highest institution of this republic.

Today, like yesterday, Spain and the United States are two pillars of the Euro Atlantic community. Spain contributed decisively to the birth of this great nation, something that makes us proud. Bernardo de Gálvez, a hero of the independence of the United States, marched side by side with George Washington on the first 4th of July. Today, his portrait is honoured in the House of Representatives in Washington D.C. it is a noble gesture that we appreciate.



We Spaniards also acknowledge the essential role that the United States has played and currently plays in protecting freedoms and democracy in the west and in the international community as a whole.

Today our freedoms and values are again under threat. They are being attacked by jihadist terrorism, which has hit our two countries hard, and which together we are facing in all scenarios it appears. I wish to render a heartfelt tribute to its victims and to the victims of all forms of terrorism. I also wish to acknowledge the work of all those who are defending our security and our lives on the front line of combat against terrorism.

Our way of life and our own survival are also under threat due to the nuclear escalation in which North Korea has embarked. Again in the face of this threat we remain resolved and united. As you know, only a few days ago Spain declared the Ambassador of North Korea to our country persona non grata. With that, we wanted to send a firm message to the Pyongyang regime and a message of solidarity to our allies.

These are some of the risks we are facing today, and for which it is necessary that the United States and Spain, together with our partners and friends, renew our already close alliance.

In this context, Spain is fully committed to NATO, an Alliance that has been key to peacekeeping efforts in the past 70 years and that has counted on the generous contribution of the U.S. as its backbone. NATO is the fundamental anchor in transatlantic security and defense, in the context of an international order that is going through a process of accelerated change. An international order that is witnessing new threats emerging in the area of cybersecurity, the so-called hybrid war or, as I mentioned before, the successive mutations of jihadist terrorism.

Another backbone in our bilateral relations is our bilateral cooperation in the area of security and defence. Mutual trust and willingness to strengthen our defense capabilities in the field of defense resulted, during the past legislature, in the entry into force of the II and III Protocol to the Bilateral Agreement on Defense Cooperation. We are also together in the global coalition against DAESH, and our police forces and intelligence services develop excellent cooperation relations. Hence, both bilaterally as well as in the framework of the Atlantic Alliance we are working side by side.

Querido Senador Kaine, queridos amigos, toda relación de alianza y amistad como es la nuestra requiere que ambas partes hagan un esfuerzo constante por conocerse y por comprenderse mejor. Este Foro ha de contribuir a ello, porque todavía hay camino por recorrer. En esta línea resulta enriquecedor destacar las raíces hispanas de Estados Unidos, los intercambios humanos y culturales entre ambas naciones y, en definitiva la historia de nuestras naciones y los capítulos de la misma compartidos.

Therefore, it is worth recalling President John F. Kennedy's words in 1961 when he affirmed, and I quote verbatim:

“I have always felt that one of the great lacks among Americans (...) has been their knowledge of the whole Spanish influence and exploration and development in the 16th century in the southwest United States, which is a tremendous story.



Unfortunately, too many Americans think that America was discovered in 1620 when the pilgrims came to my own state, and they forget the tremendous adventure of the 16th century and the early 17th century in the southern and southwest United States”.

Recalling these words is today more relevant than ever since just a few days ago we witnessed attacks to important historical figures representing the best of the Hispanic legacy in America.

Our cooperation is particularly promising in areas that are dealt with in this Forum, such as innovative technologies, infrastructures or the digital world, as well as cultural areas with a strong economic component such as tourism or gastronomy.

In particular, tourism is a strategic sector for the Spanish economy, a sector that has played a significant role in our recovery from the economic crisis. Spain occupies a clear position as world leader in tourism. In 2016, we were the third country in the world with the number of arrivals by foreign tourists, the United States being the second. We were also the third in tourist income, while the United States was the first.

In global terms, tourist sector contribution to Spanish GDP is 11.1%, with a positive result in 2016 of 36,000 million euros in commercial balance terms. Spain receives almost 2 million U.S. tourists, but we wish to receive more and send more to the U.S. tourism is also an integrating element of society, given that it promotes entrepreneurship and favours cultural exchange.

With regards to tomorrow’s session, it is well known that Spanish infrastructure companies represent today one of our sectors of economic activity with a greater presence and international leadership, with a labour force represented in the five continents and employing more than 425,000 workers.

75% of its total activity, which in 2016 exceeded 70,000 million euros in sales revenue, takes place in the international markets, making Spain a leader in the ranking of global private investment in transport infrastructure contracts. For example, five Spanish companies are among the 10 major contractors in the world. In addition, since 1985, our companies as a whole participate in 35% of transport infrastructures contracts worldwide in construction and operations. This has allowed Spain to position itself in such competitive markets as the United States, a priority market with a great international projection.

Opportunities for doing business and for business cooperation may soon rise with the launch of the announced and ambitious infrastructure program currently being designed by the United States administration. In any event, U.S. economic growth and its dynamic business climate is a great incentive for our companies to settle in this country with a long-term vision.

Spain played an important role in the design and construction of the first roads that vertebrated the U.S. territory, leaving a significant footprint on the “caminos reales”. In very different circumstances, our companies persist today in being present in the territory, landscapes and cities of the USA, by improving the services that the citizens of this country receive.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Para España, la relación con Estados Unidos es clave, somos viejos aliados y amigos. A lo largo de los últimos decenios hemos consolidado nuestros lazos en diferentes campos que han llevado a que hoy tengamos unas sólidas relaciones, cada vez más equilibradas y basadas en intereses y



valores comunes.

In the economic sector, data reveals the remarkable progress in our relations: the U.S. is the first stock investor in Spain, with about 66 billion euros, while it is the second recipient of our investment abroad, with a stock of about 70 billion euros.

Our bilateral trade has also experienced a sustained growth. Notably exports of medium-high technological content as well as exchange trade volume in both directions. In 2016, our exports totalled 11.4 billion euros, compared to 13 billion in imports, which translates into a coverage rate of approximately 88%. The U.S. is Spain's main partner outside the EU, and our sixth client, while we have a large margin for improvement from our position as the 26th client for the U.S.

One of the most promising trends of recent years is the fact that the United States has become an attractive platform for many companies, both big and middle sized, that are taking advantage of the opportunities that arise here.

For our part, we must remember that the Spanish economy emerged 3 years ago from a recession and is growing and creating employment above expectations. While at the end of 2011 our economy meant a clear risk for the euro zone, today it is one of its engines for growth. Spain is currently the fastest growing economy among advanced economies according to the IMF and the European Commission, and projections indicate that it will continue to grow.

With a growth of 3.1% of its GDP, the Spanish economy is creating a lot of business opportunities that many U.S. companies are benefiting from, by investing more or for the first time in our country. We sincerely hope that this trend will continue to rise in the coming years. Today we can proudly say that the economic policy developed by this government has paid off and corrected the main imbalances, although it is true that we continue to have high levels of unemployment that are progressively decreasing.

Dear friends,

Next week the president of the Spanish government, Mariano Rajoy, will make his first official visit to Washington under the new U.S. Administration, with which we wish to maintain excellent relations, as we have maintained with the previous administrations. Undoubtedly all these issues that unite us, from common security to economic opportunities, will be on the agenda of the talks at the white house.

Finally, I wish to thank and to congratulate José Manuel Entrecanales for his effort and dedication at the Head of the Spain-US Council Foundation, which are reflected in the daily vitality of this institution and in the co-organization of this forum, after the successful meeting in Santiago de Compostela last year.

Para el Senador Tim Kaine sólo tengo palabras de gratitud y reconocimiento del Gobierno español por su entusiasmo y trabajo durante estos más de tres años como presidente honorario del Consejo Estados Unidos - España; este Foro tan brillante y la amistad y calidez que sentimos esta noche es la mejor muestra de ello.

We also thank you, Senator Kaine, for your contribution in keeping the flame of the Hispanic world alive in this great country, which includes your commitment to the use of the Spanish language, which by the way, you handle so well.



Dear Senator Kaine, we know well and we admire your career. The Bernardo de Gálvez award you were presented with a few minutes ago, instituted by the foundation to distinguish Americans who have stood out in the promotion of our relations, has a very strong symbolic value because of what that great military man and strategist from Málaga represented at key moments for the U.S.

¡Muchas gracias Senador, le agradecemos por ser un gran y leal amigo de España. Sepa que en España lo recibiremos siempre con los brazos abiertos!

Thank you all very much for your attention. I wish you that tomorrow's session will be as successful as today's.



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