

SPEECH BY THE AMBASSADOR ON THE NATIONAL DAY OF SPAIN (OCTOBER 12, 2018)

1) Welcome and thank you.

We warmly welcome you to Spain's National Day. We feel greatly honored by your presence. I am particularly grateful for the generosity of our sponsors, Spanish companies that create employment in Poland and contribute to its prosperity.

2) Two historic and forward-looking nations

Spain and Poland have left their mark in human history. We are two old and, despite our age, young nations. We aim at creating a world that is freer, fairer, more human and more livable. Our vocation and scope are universal.

I congratulate Poland for its steadfast defense of the respect for international law at the UN Security Council. On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the San Francisco Charter, the members of the UN reaffirmed at the initiative of Spain its values, goals and principles as the cornerstone for peace.

Spain and Poland work with determination for peace and security. Spain participates in 16 international missions with more than 3000 military personnel. In Latvia we have deployed a contingent of 350 Spanish soldiers within the framework of NATO's Enhance Forward Presence. Allied security and defense are indivisible.

We must preserve the planet for future generations. The success of the UN Conference on Climate Change of Katowice will also be a success for Poland.

3) Europe

Europe is our home, by geography and out of conviction. Spain and Poland want a stronger and more cohesive European Union, endowed with a budget that allows us to address current and future challenges. The VI Spanish-Polish Parliamentary Forum held in June in Santiago de Compostela has called for a European migration policy that deals in an integrated manner with migration flows.

Brexit, a decision that has been taken by the United Kingdom, should result in a reasonable agreement that contributes to enhancing the internal cohesion among EU member states.

4) Centenary

The restoration of Poland's Independence in 1918 did justice to the aspirations of the Polish nation. Poland is today a democratic, influential and dynamic country, anchored in the European Union.

In these fluid times, which Zygmunt Bauman described as "liquid", it is more necessary than ever to anchor free societies in solid foundations. The correct functioning of the Rule of law with its checks and balances is the only true guarantor of the rights and freedoms of all citizens.

5) Appreciation of Poles by Spain

Spaniards and Poles are bound together by many things. We thrive in adversity and we are motivated by the desire of self-improvement. In Spain we have learned to admire and to recognize the many expressions of excellence that arise from Polish temper. The Príncipe de Asturias awards, now Princesa de Asturias (which among its laureates has personalities as

renowned as Simone Veil, Philip Roth, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Riccardo Muti, Mario Vargas Llosa or Rafael Nadal) has recognized the outstanding merits of Maestro Krzysztof Penderecki, journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski, thinker Zygmunt Bauman, poet Adam Zagajewski and –this very year- alpinist Krzysztof Wielicki: five peaks of art, communication, thinking, literature and sports of this great country.

6) Appreciation of Spain in Poland

We Spaniards receive numerous displays of affection and sympathy in Poland. No one has ever been able to express it in the way Saint John-Paul II did, who was elected to the Chair of St. Peter 40 years ago this month. In his first speech on Spanish soil, a country he visited on five occasions, he revealed: “ever since the first months of my election I have been looking forward to a trip to Spain”. And he added: “Its history, in spite of the flaws and human mistakes, is worthy of all the admiration and appreciation”.

7) Teaching of Spanish and Hispanic culture in Poland

The 12 faculties of Iberian studies and the 43 schools with Spanish bilingual sections that are distributed all over the country give faith of the vitality of the Spanish presence in Poland. I salute those teachers and professors who have joined us today. Poland is thanks to you a beacon of Hispanic culture.

8) Centenary of diplomatic relations

Next year we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Spain and Poland. This anniversary deserves a celebration in line with the extraordinary intensity and quality of the bonds that unite our two countries. Allow me to give four examples thereof: the trade between both countries has exceeded 10.5 billion euros; Spain is the fifth biggest investor in Poland with an approximate value of 1% GDP which employs around 200.000 people; more than one million Poles visited our country in 2017. Poland and Spain are the preferred destinations for students from both countries who apply for the Erasmus program.

In the same vein, the Embassy and the Cervantes Institutes of Warsaw and Krakow, are dedicated to providing cultural initiatives that meet demands and expectations. We enjoy the strong partnership of universities, museums, galleries, auditoriums, think tanks and the media. I take this opportunity to warmly thank all of you for your commitment. .

9) Spain's challenges

Since the restoration of democracy under the banner of reconciliation that was reflected 40 years ago in the Constitution of 1978, Spain has had to confront serious challenges to our coexistence.

ETA's terrorism was defeated thanks to the police efficiency, civic courage, strong institutions and international cooperation. More than 850 persons were assassinated: men, women and children. We owe them all justice, remembrance and truth.

Unconstrained nationalism presents itself today as a major menace. A secessionist movement with supremacist roots has shaken Spain's territorial integrity. Its drivers disregard the law, which in democracy is the guarantor of coexistence in freedom, and fail to comply with judicial decisions; they invent historical tales and manipulate the information; they despise the rights of those Catalans that oppose their ideas;; they encourage civil confrontation; its members exert harassment and lead troubling nocturnal processions with torches. In just one year, over 4500 companies have moved their

registered offices to other parts of Spain. Separatism impoverishes, undermines the coexistence and erodes the Democratic State governed by the Rule of Law. We believe in and support the judicial action as a guarantor of the observance of the law and of the rights and liberties which is an indispensable prerequisite for political action.

I wish to express our gratitude to the Polish government for its steadfast endorsement of Spanish democracy.

To my fellow countrymen, I congratulate you, because you are part of a country, Spain, that is generous and vibrant, creative and resilient, a land of more light than shade that we can rightfully feel very proud of. We share this feeling of pride and affection with His Majesty the King Philip VI who impeccably embodies the representation of Spain within and out of its frontiers.

10) Conclusion

Adam Zagajewski made the following observation on a great painter:

“Zurbarán painted Spanish saints and still lives. He alternated them and therefore the objects that lay on the weighty tables of his still lives are also saints”.

No work, no matter how small, is insignificant if we put in it affection. Kindness and care are the mortar to our daily efforts to enhance the excellent relations between Spaniards and Poles. We will continue to make efforts in the same spirit.