



**Address by the Prime Minister of Spain to the
Joint Sitting of the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of
New Mexico
Santa Fé, July 11, 2003**

Mr. Governor

Mr. President of the Senate

Mr. Speaker of the House of Representatives

Ladies and Gentlemen

When President George W. Bush visited Spain in 2001 he said, "we Americans are proud inheritors of Hispanidad." His remark, which touched the hearts of many Spaniards, is applicable to the entire United States but perhaps nowhere more so than here, the city of Santa Fe, capitol of the State of New Mexico and the oldest state capitol in the country.

In 1998 you commemorated the IV Centennial of the arrival of Spaniards in these lands. Spain joined you respectfully and enthusiastically in that celebration. Just a few days ago you recalled that important occasion further by unveiling a monument to the Spanish settlers. The monument, where I will be honored to lay a wreath tomorrow, commemorates the survival of Hispanic culture and pays tribute to those who brought it to New Mexico. The fact that it is next to the cathedral is highly symbolic.

I will admit I am deeply moved to speak here before you, the representatives of a people that over the centuries have consistently demonstrated their keen desire to celebrate their Spanish past and ensure it is kept alive today.

The message I bring from Spain and from all Spaniards is that, having been part of New Mexico's past, we want to be part of its future also. We want also to promote relations between all the peoples of New Mexico, in keeping with the spirit of the celebration of Hispanic Culture Day. We know full well that, while asserting your Hispanic roots, you also uphold your citizenship of the United States, of which you have always been loyal and faithful citizens.

New Mexicans are examples of this country's rich culture. The strong Hispanic element, from the outset an integral part of the very nature of the United States, coexists harmoniously with the other components making up American society, among them the native inhabitants of these lands. This plural reality is shaped by the powerfully cohesive values shared by American society, which give the United States its moral strength and prosperity.

This is a wonderful lesson for societies that seek to build a national, religious or racial identity as though it were a weapon to be wielded against those who do not share that identity. Such excluding societies have much to learn from the example set by New Mexicans in particular and Hispanics in general, in their willingness to preserve their own characteristics and at the same time be receptive to the best traits of others. The people of New Mexican have taught us an admirable lesson of tolerance and enrichment at home and abroad.

For Spain, the Hispanic community is, naturally, a priority in Spain-US relations. The community can and indeed does contribute significantly to fostering deeper and more fruitful relations between our two countries.

Over and above our strong Hispanic links, our relations are nurtured by other powerful factors that bring us together and help our mutual understanding. Spanish and American Societies are firmly anchored in the values of freedom and democracy and both countries cooperate extensively to uphold these values. Spain is a proudly European country that cherishes its bonds also with American, both North and South. Spain believes that the building of Europe can and should be undertaken in tandem with the development and furtherance of ties with the United States. Our two societies are underpinned by the same values, the same beliefs and the same interests.

Spain enjoys very solid, strong and firm ties with the United States and we hope that this continues to be the case in the future. Moreover, I am convinced that a solid relationship between North America and Europe is the best way to guarantee greater security, prosperity and freedom for our societies and for the entire world. The world functions better and is a safer place when Europe and the United States work shoulder to shoulder.

Recent events illustrate just how close these ties are. Spain was among the first countries to express its full and seamless solidarity with the American people after the terrorist strikes on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001. From the outset, Spain also understood and endorsed the reason why the international community had to ensure world peace and stability by eliminating the permanent threat posed by Saddam Hussein's regime. Like the United States and many other countries, we too believe that the lofty principles on which the international community is grounded must be meticulously respected.

We cannot ignore the threats posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism or the continued existence of corrupt and tyrannical states. Without doubt, the most serious threat confronting us is the possibility that terrorists might obtain weapons of mass destruction from rogue states. We would be shirking our responsibilities if we simply ignored these threats and risks. Similarly, if we merely preached lofty principles but then did not shoulder the responsibility of ensuring they are put into practice we would render international law and institutions meaningless. We are ready to assume these responsibilities, with enthusiasm, coherence and the necessary spirit of sacrifice, to uphold this legality.

Military action in Iraq and the subsequent process of reconstruction and stability have ushered in hope for the country and, generally, for the Middle East. We realize there are many obstacles to peace in the Middle East but we are willing to work hard to achieve this goal.

In Spain, the United States will find a great friend and very loyal ally. I hope that Spaniards and the Americans will be able to maintain and further deepen our excellent bilateral relations and thus contribute to a more humane, more peaceful and more prosperous world.

During the visit to Spain in June 2001, President Bush earned the gratitude of my compatriots when he offered to stand side by side with us to help fight terrorism. Not long after, in Washington, at the end of 2002, I had the opportunity to reiterate to President Bush our commitment to helping the United States in the battle against terrorism worldwide. That commitment is unreserved, with no time limit and no effort will be spared to see it through. Terrorism is a threat to civilization, all civilization. It is a threat to democracy, peace and international security.

The United States and Spain will stand together in this fight, and united we will defeat terrorism. Both our governments have consistently honored these commitments and in this respect I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the US Government and to the American people for their constant support. The inclusion of Batasuna on the State Department's list of terrorist organizations last May was a milestone in our battle against terrorism.

I would like to stress that the fight against terrorism begins by calling things by their proper name, by calling terrorists terrorists, and by making no distinction among them, just as no distinctions can be made among victims. There are no innocent versus guilty victims. Just victims. And in the fight currently being waged by the entire free world we would do well to recall that we are pursuing murderers, not ideologists. The terrorists of ETA, Al Qaeda, the IRA or the FARC of Columbia, claim to represent different ideologies but they all share a common characteristic, their criminal nature. I am convinced our societies will win the battle against terrorism using the legitimacy of democracy and the force of the rule of law. I also believe we are indebted to American society for the great patriotism and solidarity you have demonstrated in the fight against terrorism. We should also congratulate ourselves today on the successes achieved in the battle against terror and for freedom.

As Prime Minister of Spain and as a Spaniard, allow me to express my appreciation of your hospitality and say also that I feel very much at home here in New Mexico. The scenery here reminds me of my native Castile and many names are common to both. While driving along the road between Albuquerque and Santa Fe – two names closely bound up with the history of Spain- I also spotted place names such as Madrid, Algodones, Las Vegas and Bernalillo. What powerful and vivid evocations.

Moreover, I see many friends among you today. I could not list all of them but I would certainly like to take this opportunity to mention some people who have been such close friends of ours for many years, among them Governor Bill Richardson, Ed Romero, the former US Ambassador in Madrid; and also Frank Ortiz, a former Ambassador in several Latin American capitols and currently Spain's Honorary Consul here in Santa Fe. On behalf of my fellow Spaniards, allow me to extend to them, and to all of you, my friendship, appreciation and solidarity.

During the 400 years since the Spanish first arrived in what is now New Mexico, New Mexicans have remained loyal to their memory of and fondness for things Spanish. I am moved when I recall that loyalty. I would also like to say, on behalf of a vibrant, imaginative and prosperous 21st century Spain, that I have no doubt we in Spain will not disappoint the expectations you, the Spanish speakers of New Mexico and so many other States, have placed in us.

In closing, let me borrow your own expression and say "may God bless you."