



Agenda



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Palabras de Su Alteza Real el Príncipe de Asturias en la inauguración de la Conferencia "Spain-US Business Sustainability Conference" Nueva York (EE.UU.), 17 de marzo de 2009

I would like to begin by warmly thanking former Vice President Al Gore for taking part in this Conference and for delivering such a stimulating and challenging speech. He is an outstanding figure, whose friendship with Spain we value most highly. Allow me to recall a memorable visit you made to our country in 2007, when in the city of Oviedo, I had the honor of presenting you with the Prince of Asturias International Cooperation Award.

We congratulate him most sincerely for his intense work defending the environment, a sustainable economy, and a future in which our societies may learn how to grow and prosper while respecting nature.

I would also like to recognize and thank Spain's Minister of Industry, Tourism and Trade, for his initiative in organizing this Conference, together with his team of collaborators, the ICEX (the Spanish Foreign Trade Institute), a major milestone in the relations between Spain and the United States. And with respect to its focus on building a sustainable economy, I feel strongly about this field being -among other points of coincidence- one of particular importance for our bilateral relations, both in the private and public sectors, as it is for any future global agenda.

I must admit that Vice President Gore is a tough net to follow and much of what I'm going to say night sound a bit déjà-vu, but please bare with and allow me now to offer you a few comments in closing this morning's session:

Firstly, indeed, it is said that the idea of sustainable growth should underpin the important global measures necessary to overcome the current worldwide financial and economic crisis. The effectiveness of these measures depends greatly on the level of international cooperation that we are able to achieve, in good faith and strong determination to reach the necessary compromises. We must realize that only by working together and coordinating our national needs and priorities will we be able to get back on track resuming proper and satisfying levels of economic growth and job creation.

What makes this Conference so relevant is that it aims to study and strengthen means of cooperation, to exchange experiences, and to promote joint projects which may enable us to respond effectively to the challenges that both the United States and Spain are now facing, especially those concerning the economy and the environment: Our contribution to a greener, cleaner and more shared world economic recovery.

Secondly, we must obtain sufficient renewable energy to meet the present and future needs of the population in our countries and therefore help do so all over the planet. This needs heavy investment efforts and thorough research programs to reach proper efficiency levels, in order to lower costs or final price tags for the consumer and reduce subsidies.

One of the irrefutable lessons that we are still learning is that the intensive use of non-renewable resources is no longer sustainable. With the current ferocious exploitation and consumption patterns of fossil fuel, its supply -sooner rather than later- will not meet the growing demand of energy around the world because those patterns lead to their exhaustion. And in terms of the unhealthiness for the environment of our traditional and persistent dependency on non-renewable energy, as Vice President Al Gore said on accepting the Prince of Asturias Award: "We are of the Earth. We are part of Nature. When we do violence to Nature, the truth is, we tear out the fabric of life and threaten the future of Humankind itself."

We also need to continue and intensify the promotion of alternative production technologies in our industries, leading to a more efficient use of energy. Fostering the use and development of renewable energy -which is already important in so many countries- should be a universal priority. In this field, scientific exchanges, technological cooperation, together with political understanding and collaboration are of fundamental importance.

Thirdly, and as I just mentioned, in order to effectively fight environmental problems and minimize our hazardous impact, we must advance towards global

policies and shared efforts that are proactive and innovative as well as reasonable or sensitive to both the risks that threaten us and the basic needs of people all over the world, specially in less developed areas.

It should be emphasized here that these new efforts involving sustainable development can open up enormous potential in employment, innovation and wellbeing -for those countries that are capable of taking these opportunities. Even for those who still feel historically side-tracked by proper development, provided they also do their homework and, yes, find adequate aid in the process.

Indeed, as far as we can tell, those countries that are capable of rapidly adapting their economies to the demands of sustainable development will find themselves in a better competitive position for the future. In other words, technological innovation within a framework of international cooperation, and coordinated progress in this direction, will undoubtedly benefit more those who undertake such policies early on. However, there is much to be gained for us all the more we swing into a new industrial and technological paradigm that embraces nature and the environment at its core. Not so much as a restriction, with laws and sanctions, but as a cleaner and freer opportunity.

In view of this global scenario, I am glad to say that many experts in Spain, from public and private sectors, are also dedicating a great deal of thought and effort to these issues.

Spain has experienced a deep and far-reaching process of modernization over the last thirty years. I'm not discovering anything new by saying that we have renovated our production framework, transformed our infrastructure network, improved our energy supply system, revolutionized our communications network and expanded our social services network.

In fact, it is becoming quite apparent that in a considerable number of sectors, Spain ranks among the world's most advanced countries. We have wide-ranging experience in the development of renewable energy sources, in modern transport systems, in construction and efficient infrastructure management, an experience we share to a great extent with many other countries in Europe, as well as the United States.

That is why, as I mentioned before, it is so important to exchange information and advance in technological cooperation; and it is precisely in this aspect that I would now like to underscore the specific value of our relation with the United States.

It is very clear that the existing exchanges and cooperation between our two countries are greatly helped by the fact that many top Spanish researchers, capable of obtaining invaluable results, have been trained in the U.S., a trend we hope will be reinforced in the future, through joint business ventures and new scientific or technological research projects (together with more high education university exchange programs and government sponsored cooperation efforts).

In this respect there are many specific areas where we can cooperate in: energy efficiency; cleaner heating systems, transport and electric power generation; new materials, construction and urban development; recycling and waste management; or better use and conservation of water.

I am convinced that joint research and action can enable both the United States and Spain to promote cleaner innovation in these areas, and accordingly favor investment, growth and employment.

For all these reasons, let me conclude by encouraging all of you to share in our experience, and to work towards solutions that will help meet the new challenges now facing the United States and Spain as close allies and friends. This is an endeavour that has my whole-hearted support, and one that I wish all success, for the benefit of both countries.

Thank you very much.

[Versión en castellano]

Quiero comenzar agradeciendo calurosamente la intervención y la participación en esta Conferencia del Vicepresidente Al Gore. Una destacada personalidad cuya amistad hacia España valoramos muy especialmente y a quién tuve el honor de entregar en 2007, en la ciudad española de Oviedo, el Premio Príncipe de Asturias de Cooperación Internacional.

Le damos la más sincera enhorabuena por su intenso trabajo en defensa del medio ambiente, de una economía sostenible y de un futuro en el que nuestras sociedades aprendan a crecer con respeto a la naturaleza.

Deseo, asimismo, mostrar mi agradecimiento al Ministro de Industria, Turismo y Comercio de España por su iniciativa de convocar esta Conferencia, como hito importante en las relaciones entre España y Estados Unidos. Unas relaciones intensas en las que actualmente sobresale, entre otros puntos de plena coincidencia, nuestra voluntad de construir una economía sostenible.

Se dice, en primer lugar, que la sostenibilidad del crecimiento habrá de orientar las importantes medidas globales necesarias para superar la actual crisis financiera y económica generalizada. Unas medidas cuya mayor eficacia depende del nivel de cooperación y coordinación internacional que consigamos alcanzar. Hemos de persuadirnos de que sólo trabajando juntos podremos lograr volver a la senda del crecimiento y del empleo.

De ahí, el interés de esta Conferencia que se propone estudiar y potenciar vías de cooperación, intercambiar experiencias y promover proyectos conjuntos, que nos permitan dar una respuesta eficiente a los actuales retos comunes que Estados Unidos y España afrontamos en este momento..

En segundo lugar, hemos de obtener energías renovables en volumen suficiente para atender las necesidades presentes y futuras de la población en todo el Planeta.

Una de las lecciones que estamos aprendiendo, es que ya no resulta sostenible el uso intensivo de recursos no renovables, toda vez que su explotación intensiva forzosamente lleva a su agotamiento. Como dijo el Vicepresidente Al Gore al recibir el Premio Príncipe de Asturias, "Nosotros somos parte de la Tierra, somos parte de la Naturaleza. Cuando ocasionamos violencia a la Naturaleza, lo que hacemos es desgarrar el tejido de la vida y amenazar el futuro de la Humanidad".

Necesitamos continuar impulsando muy activamente tecnologías alternativas de producción, que conduzcan a un uso más eficiente de la energía. La potenciación del uso y desarrollo de las energías renovables -importante ya en tantos países- debería ser una prioridad general. En este campo, el intercambio científico, la cooperación tecnológica y el entendimiento y la colaboración políticos cobran una importancia fundamental.

En tercer lugar, y como ya antes indiqué, para luchar con eficacia contra los problemas medioambientales, es preciso avanzar hacia políticas globales y esfuerzos compartidos.

Conviene poner de relieve que las nuevas tareas que implica un desarrollo sostenible pueden abrir enormes oportunidades de empleo, innovación y bienestar para aquellos países que sepan aprovecharlas.

En efecto, todo hace pensar que los Estados que logren adaptar rápidamente sus economías a las exigencias de crecimiento sostenible estarán en mejor posición competitiva en el futuro. En otras palabras, la innovación tecnológica en un marco de cooperación internacional y el progreso coordinado en esa dirección redundarán en beneficio de quienes se decidan a emprenderlos.

Ante ese escenario global, se está reflexionando también con intensidad por parte de muchos expertos españoles del sector público y privado.

España ha vivido una importante y profunda modernización a lo largo de los treinta últimos años. No descubro nada nuevo cuando señalo que hemos renovado nuestra estructura productiva, hemos transformado nuestra red de infraestructuras, hemos mejorado nuestro esquema de suministro energético, hemos revolucionado nuestra red de comunicaciones y hemos ampliado nuestra red de cobertura social.

Es evidente, asimismo, que en no pocos sectores España figura entre los países más avanzados del mundo. Disponemos de una amplia experiencia en el desarrollo de fuentes de energías renovables, de modernos sistemas de transporte, de construcción y de gestión eficiente de infraestructuras, experiencias que estamos compartiendo con tantos otros países de Europa y también con los Estados Unidos.

Si antes mencionaba la importancia del intercambio y la cooperación tecnológica, ahora deseo insistir en su valor específico para las relaciones entre ambos Estados.

No cabe duda de que el intercambio y la cooperación entre los Estados Unidos y España vienen facilitados por el hecho de que muchos de investigadores españoles al más alto nivel y capaces de obtener los mejores resultados se han formado en Estados Unidos, dentro de una tradición que deseamos ver potenciada en el futuro mediante nuevos proyectos empresariales y de investigación conjuntos.

Son muchas las áreas de investigación en las que podemos cooperar en beneficio mutuo: tecnologías para el aumento de la eficiencia energética, tecnologías limpias para la generación de energía eléctrica, calefacción y transporte, o tecnologías para

una mejor utilización y conservación del agua.

Estoy asimismo persuadido de que la investigación y la acción conjuntas entre Estados Unidos y España pueden fomentar la innovación en estas áreas y por ende la inversión, el crecimiento y el empleo.

Por ello, quisiera, para terminar, animar a todos ustedes a compartir nuestra experiencia y a estudiar las soluciones a los nuevos retos a los que dos países amigos y aliados, los Estados Unidos y España, se enfrentan. Una tarea que cuenta con mi pleno apoyo y para la que les deseo muchos éxitos en beneficio de ambas partes.

Muchas gracias.

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