

UN Day 2014

24 October 2013

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Madrid, Spain

Taleb Rifai, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

Mr. José Manuel Garcia-Margallo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and
Cooperation of Spain

Members of the diplomatic corps, UN colleagues

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Estimados amigos, dear friends,

Buenos días a todos.

It is a great pleasure to join you all to celebrate this special day for the UN family.

Today I have the honor of addressing you on behalf of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the UN Specialized Agency for Tourism, and the 13 UN related entities with a representation in Spain – the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Millennium Campaign, the United Nations Office to Support the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" (UN Water), the United Nations Support Base in Valencia, the United Nations Global Compact, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations World Food Programme

(WFP), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), UN Habitat and the United Nations University.

In this capacity, I would like to express our utmost appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, and to Minister Margallo, for the close collaboration in hosting today's important occasion.

Estimados amigos,

Today marks the anniversary of the entry into force of the UN Charter back in 1945; the anniversary of the creation of the United Nations as a global alliance founded on the values of peace, social progress and respect for human rights.

I dare saying that the UN system is one of the most significant achievements of mankind; a system which may not be perfect, but that embodies the highest values of human ideals, and it strives to achieve them.

Nearly 70 years later, these fundamental values continue to be the pillars of our work in realizing our shared vision for a better world. A world made by and for the peoples of the United Nations.

Dear Friends,

On this auspicious occasion, I believe there could be no better time to congratulate Spain for its recent election to the United Nations Security Council for the fifth time in history. *Señor Garcia-Margallo, ¡enhorabuena por este importante logro!*

A UN Member since 1955, Spain has exemplified the spirit of multilateralism – a stronghold of its foreign policy.

Spain's profound commitment to the UN is illustrated in countless examples:

1. Spain is the sixth largest donor to the United Nations;
2. More than 130,000 Spanish soldiers have participated in peacekeeping operations and humanitarian efforts;
3. Thanks to the Government of Spain, the Millennium Development Goals Fund was created in 2007, contributing greatly in advancing the MDGs worldwide;
4. Spain has promoted the UN Global Strategy on Counter-terrorism since its inception.
5. Spain has been supporting, since 2007, the UN-Water Zaragoza Office that work to DELIVER AS ONE UN on water, a priority issue for Spain;

6. Just last July, Spain made it possible for the World Food Programme to establish its Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Gran Canaria, providing a base for emergency relief and supplies.
7. Spain is the country that has the largest number of ILO Conventions ratified.
8. And of course, I cannot fail to mention that Spain hosts the headquarters of UNWTO in the beautiful city of Madrid, as well as 15 UN-related entities in Madrid, Valencia, Zaragoza and Barcelona.

The United Nations mandate cannot be achieved without the strong support and engagement of its Member Nations, and for all the above, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to Spain.

Dear Friends

The UN is not simply a building in New York. The UN stands for the very people who embody the founding spirit of the 1945 Charter.

The UN is the people working in the war-torn regions of the world to save lives and provide assistance to over 50 million refugees and internally displaced people, fleeing from armed conflicts and persecution.

The UN is the people who volunteer to feed the hungry and provide clean water and basic sanitation in poverty-stricken areas and calamity zones.

The UN is the people fighting for the rights and protection of children.

The UN is the people promoting decent work and the fundamental rights at work.

The UN is the people working round the clock to eradicate the spread of deadly diseases.

This is the UN that we honor today – the UN of the Nations and the UN of the people who place the lives of others before their own, working passionately to build a better future.

Dear Friends,

As much as today's event calls for celebration, it is also a solemn reminder of the many challenges our world continues to face.

Uneven economic growth and geopolitical tensions continue to jeopardise the wellbeing of millions.

Escalating conflicts have taken over 50 million people away from their homes – the highest number since World War II, half of whom are children.

Mass unemployment persists, aggravating poverty and inequality.

The current Ebola crisis in Africa reminds us of the fragility of our world and the imperative need of supporting the most fragile.

Hovering over all this is the ruthless scourge of climate change.

Now more than ever the United Nations needs to take the lead in confronting these global challenges.

In today's interconnected world, every local or regional conflict or crisis is a global concern, a global responsibility and people around the world are increasingly looking up to the UN for leadership, for answers, and for solutions.

Dear Friends,

The MDGs achieved many of its targets, including poverty reduction, increased access to clean water, and gender equality in primary education.

As the deadline of the MDGs comes to a close, a new framework of development objectives is slowly taking shape.

More than 5 million people in 194 countries shared their voices through the UN 'My World' survey, on what should be the priorities of the coming Sustainable Development Goals.

These priorities include quality education, better healthcare, inclusive job opportunities and transparent and responsive governance.

Undoubtedly, the challenges we face today are numerous, but they are not insurmountable if we work together as close allies.

The strength and the sustainability of the UN system represent hope for a better world and a better future.

Recalling the principles of the UN Charter, we must *“unite our strengths...and harmonize the actions of nations in the attainment of common ends.”*

Feliz Día de las Naciones Unidas.

Happy United Nations Day.

Muchas gracias.