



# ESPAÑA

**INTERVENCIÓN DEL PRESIDENTE DEL GOBIERNO DE ESPAÑA**

**EXCMO. SR. D. PEDRO SÁNCHEZ PÉREZ-CASTEJÓN**

**EN EL DEBATE GENERAL  
DEL SEPTUAGÉSIMO SÉPTIMO PERÍODO DE SESIONES DE LA  
ASAMBLEA GENERAL DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS**

**Nueva York, 22 de septiembre de 2022**

(cotejar con la intervención pronunciada)

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**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SPAIN**

**H.E. MR. PEDRO SÁNCHEZ PÉREZ-CASTEJÓN**

**AT THE GENERAL DEBATE  
OF THE SEVENTY-SEVEN SESSION OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**New York, September 22, 2022**

(unofficial translation, check against delivery)

Mr President, Mr Secretary-General, Heads of State and Government, Ambassadors and Delegates,

Rarely have the foundations of this institution been shaken as strongly as in the early hours of 24 February, when cities throughout Ukraine felt the terror of Russian bombardments.

More than six months later, we are still witness to the horror of an invasion that takes us back to times we believed we had left behind.

Yesterday, Putin continued his headlong rush with totally unacceptable statements.

From this platform and what it represents, I want to condemn in the strongest terms the announcement of the annexation referendums in the occupied territories of Donetsk, Luhansk and Kherson.

These false referendums would constitute a new violation of international law by Putin.

Let me be clear. The results will never be recognized. We will continue to support the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Precisely now is when we need to act united in defence of the principles enshrined in the UN Charter and in support of Ukraine is most needed.

This war seeks to rob the sovereign people of Ukraine from their legitimate right to exist in peace and freedom and it has condemned the entire world to an era of uncertainty. And it has done so at the very moment when we were on the cusp of a well-deserved era of optimism, just after humanity had successfully set in motion the greatest scientific and humanitarian cooperation effort of its history, to combat Covid-19. In these uncertain times, the economic and social consequences of the war are a threat to global prosperity. A food crisis is unfolding, together with an energy crisis provoked by an autocrat who will stop at nothing to stay in power. The impact on prices, already rising due to the supply chain disruptions, threatens to leave the world's poorest even poorer.

It is not hard to understand why many people feel that they have had enough. Especially young people, born at the start of this new millennium. A generation that, as well as confronting this new crisis in their lives, is living under the very real threat of the climate emergency and its consequences for the world they will inherit.

But, despite everything, I am certain that precisely where the danger lies, there too lies our salvation. This is why, today, I wish to extend an unequivocal message of trust and confidence.

Trust in the capacity of the international community to overcome any adversity. And confidence in the strength of an institution such as the United Nations to rise up against challenges that know no borders.

Allow me to focus this reflection on five major challenges: the commitment to global health, the food crisis, the ecological transition, the digital transition, and gender equality.

In matters of global health, it is essential that we learn from the lessons of our fight against the pandemic. On 9 November 2020, the whole world celebrated the news that the first vaccine against the virus was proving successful. Barely six weeks later, the first doses began to be administered. With these vaccines, not only did we invert the trend of the pandemic: we also reversed the pessimism of a world that had come to question whether things would ever return to normal. The vaccine represents the triumph of the human spirit over adversity.

In just two years, the world has managed to develop forty vaccines against Covid-19. Through COVAX, more than two billion doses have been allocated to developing countries. Massive vaccination campaigns have enabled us to control the spread of the virus and return to normality in many countries. However, it is clear that much remains to be done. There is an outrageous degree of inequality between countries as regards access to the vaccine. This inequality, moreover, is to the detriment of humanity as a whole: a virus cannot be eradicated if its spread is not halted in every corner of the planet.

Spain seeks to be part of the global solution to this enormous challenge. We will contribute €15 million to the Financial Intermediary Fund for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response, and we support the adoption of a legally binding international instrument for this purpose by the World Health Organization.

Our indebtedness to science demands that we act in other areas that may have been neglected in the race against the virus. We must, for example, step up our efforts and promote scientific research to guarantee universal access to medical care and treatment.

Over the next three years, Spain intends to allocate more than 237 million euros of its Official Development Assistance to health-related issues, including 130 million euros for the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The second major challenge I wish to speak of is the food crisis currently threatening millions of human beings. This is a complex problem that has the potential to deteriorate yet further in 2023.

The crisis has been heightened by Russia's blockade of grain exports from Ukraine, but also by selfish decisions to erect barriers to trade in agricultural products and fertilizers.

Two days ago, as cosponsor of the Leaders Network "Reinforcing Multilateralism Together", I co-chaired together with the President of Senegal and Chairperson of the African Union, the President of the European Council and the US Secretary of State, the Food Security Summit. It gathered world leaders from all regions, especially those most affected by this crisis, and we adopted a joint declaration renewing our commitment to deal with the crisis.

This meeting had a very clear purpose: to address this challenge and to seek solutions, as a matter of urgency. At this meeting, I announced that Spain would mobilize 151 million euros in donations and a further 85 million euros in loans, over the next three years.

This action is consistent with Spain's commitment to combating inequality and poverty the world over. A commitment that is exemplified in the new Cooperation Act, which provides that Spain will allocate 0.7% of its Gross National Income to Official Development Assistance by 2030.

The third major challenge I wish to discuss is the climate emergency, and the need to foster an ecological transition, with urgency and determination.

The current energy crisis requires us to invest decisively in more sustainable energy models and to increase our energy independence. It is essential that we diversify, electrify, and decarbonize our energy mix, for the following two reasons:

Firstly, to prevent countries from using their energy resources as a weapon of war. The Putin regime believes it has the right to blackmail the entire planet, pushing up inflation and jeopardizing the necessary recovery of our economies from the pandemic.

And, secondly, to respond to the fundamental and increasingly evident challenge faced by our own generation and by those yet to come: the challenge of climate change. In the light of current events, we must be even more determined than ever to fulfil the commitments made to decarbonize our economies.

The question is not whether it is convenient to do so. It is how to do so fairly and with the speed demanded by science: time is running out.

In this respect, Spain wishes to put forward specific solutions to the United Nations. Together with Senegal, we will support the creation of an "International Alliance for Drought Resilience" to promote innovation, technology transfer and the mobilization of resources to combat drought in countries exposed to this threat.

Later this year, in November, we will present this initiative at the COP 27 in Egypt, in conjunction with the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and with other interested countries.

The energy crisis is placing a strain on every country in Europe, including my own, and is hitting the middle and working classes especially hard. All the measures being adopted to reduce its impact are based on a common principle: that this time, the costs and sacrifices will not be borne by that vast majority of citizens which has already suffered too much in previous crises.

Spain has promoted far-reaching regulatory reforms to reduce the impact of rising gas prices. But we are well aware of the need to overhaul the electricity sector, throughout the European Union, and this is

something we have been working on for more than a year. It is time to bring the sector closer into line with today's reality, by limiting and distributing the costs and benefits of price increases more fairly.

The fourth great global challenge I would like to address concerns the digital transformation and its impact on the future of education and employment.

Just this Monday, Spain participated in a session of the Transforming Education Summit that was dedicated to the digital transformation of education. At this session, we evoked the lessons of the pandemic, stressing that technological solutions had made it possible to overcome the barriers that were making in-person teaching impossible.

Spain aspires to playing a leading role in this sphere. For example, the UN Technology Centre for the digitalization of education, GIGA, will be established in Barcelona thanks to Spain's collaboration with UNICEF and the International Telecommunication Union.

Education is the key to making our societies more informed and aware, and hence freer, more inclusive and more equal. If we wish to achieve further advances in human rights, it is essential that we continue to support the right to education for all, but especially for girls.

It is there, at school, where the path towards gender equality and the empowerment of women really starts.

Which brings me to the fifth and final topic I wish to address today, namely the feminist agenda and the struggle for gender equality.

We are living in times in which demanding basic rights is still a revolutionary act. The global threats to women's sexual and reproductive freedom are yet another example of how painfully slowly the world is moving towards guaranteeing full equality. Worse still is the fragility of our past social gains, which have fallen victim to backsliding in certain advanced democracies—something quite inexplicable at this stage of the twenty-first century.

Spain will continue to be at the forefront of this endeavour. The new Organic Law for the Comprehensive Guarantee of Sexual Freedom and the future Act on Sexual and Reproductive Health will help ensure that the public health service continues to attend to women and meet all their health needs, throughout our country.

In this respect, I would like to announce that Spain will contribute 100 million euros over the next three years to organizations such as UN Women that are working for gender equality, especially in the area of reproductive and sexual rights.

It is essential that we listen to women, that we eradicate the barriers preventing them from taking their rightful place in companies, in governments and in working for peace.

I invite you to compare images from 20, 30 or 40 years ago. Compare the family photos you keep at home with the images that appeared in the media at the time. In both cases, you may be surprised, and even amused, to see how we have changed: in fashions, appearance and customs.

But in comparing such images, you will notice an inexcusable discrepancy: the presence of women in your family photographs and their absence from public images reflecting the political and economic realities of the times. We have made great progress in equality between women and men. But much remains to be done and nothing is guaranteed, as we saw just a few months ago in Afghanistan when the Taliban returned to power.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Last month I had the privilege of visiting the Centre for Memory, Peace and Reconciliation in Bogotá. I was able to witness, first-hand, the efforts made by an entire people, and especially its women, to move on from the past, to pay reparations to the victims, and to build a society free from violence. Colombia is embarking upon a new era of hope and of peacebuilding, and Spain will be at its side, ready to lend our support.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have a fundamental role to play in the world, beginning with the defence of democracy. However, the region also needs international support, including in the fight against drug trafficking.

Spain is more committed than ever to Latin America and the Caribbean, and we will work to tighten EU relations with this region during our presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of the coming year.

Our presidency comes at a key moment for Europe. We will assume it with hope and with trust, aware of the magnitude of the challenge and of the responsibility it represents.

We want Europe to broaden its vision, not only by revitalizing its fundamental alliance with Latin America and the Caribbean, but also by paying closer attention to its Southern Neighbourhood.

Our intention is for the priorities I have just mentioned to inform and guide our actions during those six months.

The green transition, the digital transition, but also the social one, will set the path that Spain will take during its Presidency.

The European Union is a project of stability and harmony. A project of peace, which we would wish to see reflected in other areas of the planet, beginning with Ukraine.

It is clear that we must continue working to ensure that other countries and regions, in addition to Ukraine, also recover their stability. We are making headway in the negotiations to reach a nuclear agreement with Iran, in which the European Union is playing an essential role. But we have seen, very recently, how the tensions in the East China Sea are threatening the status quo in a region that is key for both the present and the future of humanity.

Asia's importance to global security was made very clear at the NATO Summit held in Madrid earlier this year, with the Alliance's Pacific partners participating, for the first time ever, at the highest level.

The Madrid Summit welcomed the two new NATO members, Sweden and Finland, and approved the Alliance's new Strategic Concept, which will guide its future in the coming years.

The Strategic Concept adopted in Madrid offers a refined diagnosis of an increasingly complex strategic environment. It features a significant mention of the Alliance's Southern flank and, in particular, the Sahel, a region afflicted by growing instability. We must pay attention to the risks that are highly present in the region, such as irregular flows of migrants and the threat of terrorism. Said threats may soon be exacerbated by the cumulative effects of the food and energy crises, climate change, and demographic trends.

We must leave behind the conflicts of the past century. That is why, as regards Western Sahara, Spain supports a mutually acceptable political solution in the framework of the UN Charter and Security Council resolutions. In this regard, Spain fully supports the work of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy, which we deem to be absolutely crucial.

Spain will also continue to support the Sahrawi population in the refugee camps, as it has always done, as the principal international donor of humanitarian assistance in this context.

As regards Gibraltar, as I reported during last year's Session, on 31 December 2020, Spain and the United Kingdom reached a bilateral understanding in the context of the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union.

We have been working since that date to ensure that said understanding serves to lay the foundations for the future relationship of this territory with the European Union, trusting that an Agreement may be reached as soon as possible between the European Union and the United Kingdom in relation to Gibraltar.

This Agreement must fully respect UN doctrine regarding said territory, with which Spain is fully aligned. And it must, too, respect the legal position of my country as concerns the sovereignty and jurisdiction thereof. We wish to work to develop an area of social and economic prosperity encompassing Gibraltar and the Campo de Gibraltar in their entirety.

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the beginning of this address I spoke of two feelings: trust in the future and confidence in this institution.

Two years ago, we feared we might never again live in a world in which two people could shake hands or embrace each other. We came to the point of believing that such gestures of courtesy and affection would be collateral victims of the pandemic. Today, that world, which seemed out of reach, is already back. Similar fears have been felt at various moments of human history, when society has been faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges.

And yet hope, as ever, will lead the way. Sometimes with a push from science and knowledge. And other times simply due to our will not to repeat the fatal errors of the past.

Humanity will always find a way of overcoming the blows it is dealt, and continue moving forward. What matters is how we deal with these blows; how we heal the wounds inflicted upon us along the way, while at the same time protecting the most vulnerable.

We must be guided by the values and principles endorsed by all of us as members of this Organization, in which Spain, yet again, wishes to express its utmost trust. We must persevere in our efforts and ambition to build a world that is freer, more prosperous, and more just. And to this end, it is essential that we strengthen rules-based multilateralism and, in short, that we strive to guarantee peace—the most valuable asset we can possess.

Thank you very much.