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Es gilt das gesprochene Wort



Verleihung des
Internationalen Karlspreises zu Aachen 2019

an

António Guterres

Ansprache

durch

S.M. König Felipe VI. von Spanien

englisch



CASA DE S.M. EL REY
COMUNICACIÓN

**EMBARGO: HASTA EL FINAL DEL DISCURSO
- SÓLO ES VÁLIDO EL DISCURSO PRONUNCIADO -**

**Laudatio by His Majesty for António Guterres Chalemagne Prize ceremony in Aachen
Aquisgrán, 29 May 2019**

Señoras y señores. Les traigo al corazón de Europa los saludos más afectuosos de España, de esa península ibérica, mediterránea y atlántica a la vez, que compartimos con nuestros queridos hermanos de Portugal. E, portanto, em sua honra, como na do meu admirado António Guterres, eu também quero cumprimentá-los na bela língua de Camões, em português.

I shall now continue in English; and I would like to begin by warmly thanking the Mayor, the Board of Directors and the organizers for trusting me with this very special task; that is, to deliver the laudation of Secretary General Guterres as this year's recipient of Charlemagne Prize. I am truly pleased and honoured.

Dear Antonio, allow me to say as a friend and as a proud European citizen, congratulations! –Or as you would like to hear: meus parabens!

More than twelve hundred years ago, the European dream began here, in Aachen. Today that dream remains very much alive thanks to the vision and determination of exceptional individuals with the calibre of António Guterres; a man who combines the European perspective and the international calling of his homeland –Portugal–, to which we also pay tribute today.

Like his compatriots who set sail across the oceans at the beginning of the Modern Age –as did mine–, António Guterres is a man of broad horizons; and alike those great explorers, he throws his considerable energy into every endeavour on which he embarks. He does so with the clarity of his insight, with the force of his resolve, and with heartfelt solidarity, all of which are borne out in his political, intellectual and personal achievements.

António Guterres is a man who knows how to reconcile his profound ethical and social convictions with the scientific rigour of his academic background. He became involved in politics as a very young man, at a decisive moment in his country's history. I am referring here to the transition that we Spaniards experienced at the same time, with equal hope and determination: the transition from dictatorship to democracy.

Since then, António Guterres's commitment to justice and to harmony have guided his career: as Prime Minister of Portugal from 1995 to 2002; as President of the European Council in the year 2000; as the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees from 2005 to 2015; and, since January 2017, as the UN's Sec.Gen.

In each –and every one– of these appointments he has consistently lead his political action standing by three inalienable principles:

The first, solidarity with those most in need, whether they live in the inner city or on the outskirts, in the remotest rural areas, or in regions devastated by conflict or natural disaster.

The second, the quest for an ever-closer union between the peoples and the States of Europe. This is a goal that unites all of us here today and one to which António Guterres has devoted the utmost energy and effort from his high-level political positions in Portugal, and in European and multilateral institutions.

The third, but just as important, the contribution of a united Europe to the just causes of humankind. Two of these causes, as he himself insists, require our most urgent attention: the plight of migrants, displaced persons and refugees fleeing from poverty, war and persecution; and the fight against the adverse effects of climate change, the outcome of which will determine our very survival as a species.

To address these two major challenges facing humanity, Europe must act in accordance with the values it champions. We must meet these challenges with action, following in the steps of our founding fathers by building upon concrete achievements.

We must do this by fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, by complying with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and by advancing further along the path opened by the signing in Marrakesh last year of the Global Compact on Migration. A Compact, which António Guterres has personally promoted with great resolve and determination as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

António Guterres's work and his appointment at the head of the UN serve as a clear reminder that the European dream does not end at our borders; that our ideals are the same as those shared by millions of people the world over, from all social strata and belonging to all generations and cultural traditions.

There are those who today wish to abandon that dream, claiming that in so doing they will become more open to a new world, and leave behind the alleged restrictions of the old Europe. They are mistaken on two fronts: the century and the endeavour. The world they contemplate is not that of the future, but of the past, a world of confrontation between major powers and economic blocs, a world whose chasms we know only too well.

For many generations, including my own, Europe has always been with us, both as an intellectual project and as a way of life. We identify with Europe. A feeling of belonging to this European project truly unites us; one that co-exists with –and forms part of– our own identity. Let us never forget that this European project –admittedly an “unprecedented historical experiment”, as some have called it– has provided the vast majority of Europeans with the highest levels of well-being, progress and security in our history. It is definitely one of the two greatest projects for peace of all times, the other one currently has our Laureate at the helm...

António Guterres's example shows that there is no contradiction between the construction of a more united Europe and the quest for an open and plural international order —one that is more just and more cooperative— founded on the principles and values of the UN Charter.

As stated over half a century ago by the first recipient of the Charlemagne Prize, Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, “European union is a means and no end”. Rather, it is a step towards the establishment of a true union between nations founded on diversity and the defence of human dignity and human rights.

There are also those who renounce the supranational European dream, not to open themselves up to the wider world but to turn their backs on it. In this case, the rejection of the European project does not stem from any nostalgia for idealized past glories, but from fear in the face of an uncertain present and future. One we ought to acknowledge and address, not just reject in disdain.

We would be ill advised to underestimate or dismiss this fear, for it is a powerful force. The fear that today besets millions of our fellow Europeans stems from insecurity, and from the experience of inequality, heightened by the recent economic crisis.

We must not ignore those who feel this way. Nor must we think that we cannot win them back to the European cause. On the contrary, the European institutions from which they currently feel excluded must answer their concerns and help satisfy their aspirations. Therefore, we must reform these institutions to make them more effective, applying the lessons learned from the recent crisis.

There are reasonable proposals for how to do this and the necessary momentum to carry them out should come from the new leadership at the head of the institutions.

This is the best tribute that we can pay to António Guterres. A Europe which begins this new cycle with vigour and which maximizes this renewed trust to promote the agenda led by Guterres from his position at the head of the United Nations. His plan to reform the Organization and make it “fit for purpose” is both commendable and necessary, and certainly deserves our support.

So naturally, it gives me great pride as a Spaniard and a friend of Portugal, and a European, that António Guterres should receive the Charlemagne Prize this year. The first Portuguese proudly to become part of this renowned list of men and women that exemplify the high values, ambitions and deeds we all need, seek and cherish for our nations, for Europe and for the entire World.

I am soon to finish, but let us remember that Portugal and Spain, the “Iberian community”, were missing at the dawn of Europe’s 20th century new dream; much later, together once again, we signed the Treaty of Accession in 1985. With this, we became fully-fledged members, contributing all our energy and enthusiasm to the common European project, which we helped to strengthen. At the same time, we became unequivocally and irreversibly anchored to democracy and to this community of States, founded on the values of freedom, respect, peaceful co-existence and pluralism. Portugal and Spain thus began to move in step with the heartbeat of Europe that we celebrate here today.

As Fernando Pessoa, a compatriot of Guterres, once wrote: “Tudo vale a pena quando a alma nao é pequena”, (“Everything is worthwhile if the soul is not small”). António Guterres’s soul is immense, and so too are the wisdom, experience and passion with which he defends his ideals, all so fittingly acknowledged with the awarding of this prize. A prize, I would add, conferred on those who most contribute to the union of the European peoples so that they may defend the highest earthly values — freedom, humanity and peace—, provide effective aid to peoples suffering under oppression and poverty, and safeguard the future of our children and our children’s children.

This award, in other words, is a perfect tribute to the many merits of António Guterres, as a great European and as a citizen of the world.

Thank you very much.