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SPAIN: SIDE BY SIDE WITH UKRAINE

– *Ukraine is grateful for Spain's continuous political, military, financial, and humanitarian support in the war started by the Russian Federation against our state. Your Excellency, what aspects of Spanish assistance do you consider to be the most significant?*

– First, I want to say that it is very rewarding to be the Ambassador of Spain to Ukraine because, as an ambassador, I can feel the support of my country towards yours, so my citizens and Government push me to develop the relations between our two countries as much as possible. Moreover, it is rewarding in that you can feel the appreciation of Ukrainians for what the Spanish people are doing for Ukraine. Indeed, we are doing many things in many fields. The military aspect is probably the best known by the public: Leopards, anti-aircraft systems, and armoured vehicles, etc. We are supporting in that area not only bilaterally but also through the European Union – as part of the European Defence Fund, funded by us and other EU Member States, to supply Ukraine with military materiel.

For the Spaniards, another very important aspect of our cooperation is welcoming of Ukrainian displaced people. Now, there are more than 186,000 of them in Spain. We understand that they will come back when the situation in Ukraine improves, and Spanish people try to do their utmost for their stay to be comfortable.

We also provide, of course, institutional support through financial and humanitarian instruments, and as of 1 September 2023, we have committed around 420 million euros in grants, loans, and guarantees, and we are going to continue to support the reconstruction process.

There is also, of course, the political support. The President of the Government of Spain was in Kyiv on 1 July to mark the start of our Presidency of the Council of European Union as a strong political message of support to Ukraine. He had been here on two previous occasions: on the anniversary of the aggression and before that, in April 2022, he was also one of the first to come after the attack on Kyiv.

We also will continue to support your path towards the European Union, as we have done collectively by granting Ukraine candidate status to the EU. Within the President of the Council of the EU, Spain is doing its utmost to facilitate the opening of accession negotiations. Within the European Union, we are contributing to advance the different aspects of the support to Ukraine, for instance

with regard to sanctions against Russia, an area where 11 packages have already been approved by unanimity. We also have made collective efforts to get rid of the dependency on Russian energy.

We continue to work to render Russia accountable for its aggression and war crimes. To this effect, we financially support the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and participate in coordination groups like the Dialogue Group on war crimes and the Core Group regarding the crime of aggression. A Spanish police team has also documented proof of damages caused to civilian infrastructures by Russian attacks.

We provide diplomatic support to Ukraine in reaching out to third countries to explain the Ukrainian position, and we contribute to concrete issues, like the Grain from Ukraine initiative (which we have financed with 4.4 million euros) or the International Atomic Energy Agency, where we have supported programmes specifically directed to Ukraine and the Ukrainian candidacy to its Board of Governors.

But if I had to underline one aspect of the relations between Spain and Ukraine, it would be the support of the Spanish people. More than 80% of Spaniards support Ukraine, practically across the entire political spectrum. It is support that is not faltering and is the basis for our long-term commitments to Ukraine.

– *Spain announced its intention to join the Group of Seven's long-term security commitments for Ukraine, as proposed during the NATO Summit in Vilnius. How does Spain envision its role as a security guarantor for Ukraine?*

– I think it is important to understand the idea behind this initiative, which is to prevent the repetition of aggression and to create security conditions in which this tragedy cannot happen again. This Declaration was approved in the G7 summit's margins, and we joined it immediately after.

There is also a strong commitment in that direction within the European Union, reflected in the conclusions of the European Council of June 2023. And we are already showing our commitment as Europeans: as I have explained, the EU supports Ukraine in military sphere, but also financially, on sanctions, energy security, etc.

The Declaration of the G7 identifies as areas of possible cooperation the provision of equipment to Ukraine, the development of its defence industry, joint exercises, training, intelligence collaboration, economic cooperation and technical support. Spain is already active in many of these areas; for instance, we have the capacity to train 4,000 Ukrainian military per year in Spain within the European Union Military Assistance Mission, and we are doing so right now. We are also providing equipment of all kinds, including a Role 2 + field hospital most recently. As for the concrete modalities to be envisaged in the framework of this Declaration, we will have to sit down with the Ukrainian authorities and see in which areas the cooperation can be even more productive.

I would like to point out that the Declaration of the G7 also mentions the commitment of Ukraine, for instance, to improve transparency, the fight against corruption, and the democratic control over the military. This is part of a more general framework: Ukraine has embarked on a modernisation process, in which accession to the European Union plays a crucial role, and the fulfilment of the recommendations of the European Commission will allow Ukraine to advance in it. So, while it is important that we, as partner countries of Ukraine, try to develop further cooperation, it is crucial for Ukraine to improve its general legal framework to converge towards our common goal of Ukraine being fully sovereign, independent, and integrated into Europe.

– *What changes do you foresee in the security situation in Europe?*

– The security situation in Europe has dramatically changed because of the aggression, and I think the changes are to stay. Previously, the European Union in particular worked under the assumption that economic interdependence was a way to ensure security. This aggression has shown, however, that interdependence also produces vulnerability and that sometimes it is wise to diminish this vulnerability by diminishing interdependence. You must also choose your partners well not to depend excessively on those who can turn against you. This has converged towards the idea of developing an open strategic autonomy of the European Union, which means for the EU to be better prepared to prevent and react to this kind of situation. As the High Representative Josep Borrell has said, it has forced the European Union to do something it hadn't wanted to do in the past: to speak the language of power. This implies developing our defence industry and increasing the budgets in the defence field in full cooperation and compatibility with NATO. NATO is indeed an essential part of this equation. At a recent point in history, NATO was put into question; now, we have the confirmation that it is an indispensable element of European security.

The new Security Concept approved at Madrid's NATO Summit fully reflects this new situation. Spain is playing its part in defending the eastern flank with air police deployments in the Baltic Sea and Romania, deploying air defence systems in both areas and significantly participating in the NATO Response Force in the Baltic region. More recently, we have committed to be present also with significant military forces in Slovakia. All this shows that we consider European security as a whole, and our concern is not limited to our immediate geographical surrounding area, in a 360-degree conception of security. This approach will continue, as it constitutes an investment in our security in the long term, in which we will have to limit dependence in strategic areas and with maybe not-so-reliable counterparts, and will need to be ready to react in case of new military challenges. This, I think, is going to remain a feature of European security in the foreseeable future.



Українських військових, які проходять підготовку в Сарагосі, відвідала Міністерка оборони Іспанії

Spanish Defence Minister visited Ukrainian soldiers undergoing training in Zaragoza

– *Spain established the Situation Committee under the National Security Council to address the crisis caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine. The Situation Committee has set up five specific working groups on cybersecurity, sanction policy, reception of temporarily displaced persons from Ukraine, energy, and reconstruction of Ukraine. Your Excellency, what achievements has the Committee gained in those spheres so far?*

– The creation of this Committee came very early, in February 2022, and it stemmed from the awareness that the challenge we would face was extensive and needed the coordination of many actors in the Spanish administration. All the ministries involved in the reaction to the crisis participate in this Committee, not only the most obvious ones, such as Foreign Affairs or Defence but also those who have to deal with different consequences of the war, such as the situation of displaced people: Social Affairs, Internal Affairs, etc.

Five Working Groups were created within this Committee to tackle this complex challenge. The first one, on cybersecurity, was based on the experience of Russia's attempts to interfere in our internal affairs. We have gained experience since this first happened, and the group continues monitoring possible interferences. Now, we are better prepared to tackle this kind of issue.

The second one is the Group on sanctions. As I said before, from the beginning, there was an effort by the European Union members to put sanctions in place, but in order to apply them, we needed to be internally coordinated, so

we created this group. In the framework of this group, 65 funds, accounts, and diverse financial instruments have been frozen, as well as 70 buildings, five ships, and four planes. It is a work in progress.

The third Group, and probably the one that has had the most visible results, is the one on the internationally displaced people. As I said, we now have more than 186,000 displaced Ukrainians in Spain, on top of the Ukrainian nationals that were there before the aggression (around 120,000). We have created new methods to welcome the displaced people: four welcoming centres have been created across the Spanish geography as well as new accelerated procedures to provide them with documents and the orientation they need to settle in Spain have been put in place. We have also established arrangements to give Ukrainians displaced in Spain medical treatment, and in special cases, we have also provided medical treatment to Ukrainians, particularly children and wounded military, brought directly from Ukraine. Frankly, we are very proud of this dimension because it's our very direct and person-to-person way to express our solidarity with Ukraine.

The fourth Group works on energy security. Fortunately, Spain was not as dependent on Russian oil as other countries, and we have been able to diversify and significantly diminish that dependency.

The fifth Group deals with reconstruction, an area which will be essential for the future of Ukraine. We are willing to play our role in the reconstruction effort with European Union and other partners, but we also need to coordinate different departments internally in Spain with that goal. This work is advancing very well in identifying sectors, financial instruments, and ways to contribute to this process. As I have indicated, we have committed bilaterally around 420 million euros in different ways to Ukraine, and this comes on top of our cooperation through the European Union.

– *Spain supports the Peace Formula initiated by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy. As stated in the Joint Declaration issued on 1 July 2023, Spain already provides significant contributions under several points identified in the Formula. Mr Ambassador, can you tell us more about Spanish contributions?*

– First, I would like to convey once again the full support of Spain to the Peace Formula of President Zelenskyy. We think it is a very good initiative to try to think ahead and tackle the different issues encompassed in the 10 points that the Peace Formula includes. As mentioned, we are already contributing in practice to most of the points of the Peace Formula, and now, we are also contributing to the discussion among international partners on how best to have an international dialogue to advance these points that will culminate in a Peace Summit.

The Ukrainian Office of the President has created a number of working groups on these issues. We are participating in the meetings and trying to contribute our thoughts and initiatives to the process. It is important to engage the

international community as a whole to set the conditions for future peace and work to solve current challenges, such as the threat to food security. I can briefly outline our contribution to all of those 10 points of the Peace Formula.

In nuclear safety, as I mentioned, we are supporting the International Atomic Energy Agency with specific funds for Ukraine.

As for food security, we have contributed to the Grain from Ukraine initiative with 4.4 million euros. We also sponsored a pilot project to bring to our country Ukrainian grain by train, in order to create alternative ways of allowing it to reach international markets. We are fully committed to the European Union's solidarity lanes, which are particularly crucial when, unfortunately, the agreement on which the Black Sea Initiative is based has been jeopardised by the fact that Russia has withdrawn from it.

On energy security, during the dramatic times in the past winter when Russia systematically attacked Ukraine's infrastructure, we contributed financially to the Energy Support Fund with 4.5 million euros, with electric equipment and generators that were used, for instance, in the invincibility points to directly support the population in this difficult situation.

Regarding prisoners of war and children in conflict, the Embassy of Spain in Ukraine is a member of the Group of Friends on Children in the Armed Conflict in Ukraine; this humanitarian issue is very relevant to us. We are very active in international fora, particularly in Geneva, on all humanitarian aspects.

Regarding the territorial integrity of Ukraine, we have been supporting the efforts within international fora, particularly the UN General Assembly, to advance the principles of independence, sovereignty, and complete territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. During the last Summit of the Crimean platform, to which Spain is a party, our Minister for Foreign Affairs reiterated our support for territorial integrity, which is not only a right of Ukraine but also an essential element of the current legal international order. Indeed, if this principle is breached with impunity, we run the risk of slipping into a chaotic situation where any country can use any pretext to invade its neighbour for territorial gains.

We also support, of course, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine, and we are supporting the accountability for the crimes committed against Ukraine, aggression, war crimes or other actions related to the war. Together with 42 other countries, we have joined the indictment against the Russian Federation in the International Criminal Court to make accountable those responsible for the crimes committed during this aggression.

On environmental security, we've reacted swiftly to the Nova Kakhovka disaster with humanitarian help. We are exploring ways to cooperate with Ukraine in this field, in particular by identifying and documenting the damages that have been caused by war to the Ukrainian environment.

With regard to the ninth point, about preventing the repetition of war, I have already mentioned the main elements of our support in line with the G7 Declaration. It is clear that we can't afford to have peace at any cost; it has to be a just and sustainable peace. The Ukrainian authorities consistently repeat this, and we fully support Ukraine in their position.

Finally, the tenth point of the Peace Formula is about finding closure to the war. This is related to another point I made before: this war does not end when the war ends because afterwards, we will collectively need to contribute to Ukrainian reconstruction. And Spain will be there for you in this process.

– *Spain declared its commitment to support the post-war recovery of Ukraine. In your opinion, what spheres are the most promising and attractive to Spanish investments?*

– In July, the Spanish Vice Minister for Trade visited Kyiv. She came with a large group of representatives of public companies and public institutions to take the first steps to explore the possibilities of investments in Ukraine. Some Spanish companies are already here, and some are interested in coming, but, of course, the situation is complicated. We must establish the right instruments and correctly assess the environment so they can come.

On the day the Vice Minister was in Kyiv, a new line of credit of 30 million euros was approved by Spanish authorities to insure the companies that would come to Ukraine. That is a way we need to continue exploring to foster the engagement of Spanish companies.

I have to say Spanish companies are very advanced in many areas, chiefly in technological ones, and very cost-efficient and competitive. I think they have an important role to play and can also contribute to developing Ukraine's industry in different sectors because the reconstruction process that I have already mentioned is not just about repairing what has been damaged, it goes beyond that. It is about putting Ukraine at the level of the European Union member states; it is about what the Americans call 'Build Back Better'. So, we will need very strong cooperation between Ukrainian and international companies, including Spanish ones.

According to the Spanish Vice Minister, the sectors that are of primary interest to Spanish companies include infrastructure, particularly railways, in which we have some similarities with Ukraine because we also have a different track width than the rest of Europe, and we can share possible solutions for this kind of challenge. Spain is also very advanced in renewable energy, which is part of the present and future of Ukraine, since Ukraine has already covered ground in reducing its carbon footprint and will continue to work in that direction. Our companies have worldwide expertise in the area of high-voltage electric grids. Spain is an important player in the transformation of agricultural products, and this is an area of natural mutual understanding since you are a very important



Національна поліція Іспанії організувала табір солідарності для дітей співробітників МВС України в муніципалітеті Сан-Педро-дель-Пінатар

The Spanish National Police organised a solidarity camp for children of Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs officers in the municipality of San Pedro del Pinatar

agricultural producer. Hopefully, Ukraine will move up the ladder in transforming more of your production. Another aspect in which Spanish companies have a lot of experience is the health system, which something that can be useful for Ukraine. And this is not a closed list. What we have to do is to explore different areas; for instance, soon Ukraine is going to organise a forum on the defence industry [the forum was held in Kyiv on 29 September 2023], and Spanish companies will be there. This will be another opportunity to identify common areas of interest where we can do joint ventures and develop joint projects.

– *What cultural and educational projects does the Embassy of Spain in Ukraine implement to enhance cooperation between our states?*

– Let me first explain why we attach great importance to our cultural cooperation with Ukraine. Firstly, I think this field is especially important in the present circumstances because this is also a psychological war. With the night attacks on the civilian population, the aggressor tries to undermine the resilience of the Ukrainians. Of course, they do not succeed in doing so; on the contrary, Ukrainians show a high degree of resilience. And the participation of the Ukrainian people in cultural manifestations is part of this resilience. It is a way of resisting the aggressor. Secondly, this war is not only a psychological war but also a cultural war in the sense that there is the idea in the back of the minds of the aggressors that Ukrainian culture doesn't exist and constitutes just an ancillary part of another culture. For that reason, culture and cooperation in the cultural sphere is very important. We are trying to develop exchanges so

that Spanish culture is known in Ukraine, but also Ukrainian culture is known in Spain. It is a dialogue of cultures.

As for the work of the Embassy in this field, it is manifold. We are working in the area of theatre by adapting a Spanish play from the 17th century to Ukrainian reality. We are bringing the Spanish operetta style called *zarzuela* to Ukraine, trying to make it accessible to the Ukrainian public. In the area of cinema, we have supported some Ukrainian festivals, like the Molodist or the Sunny Bunny; we have already organised one Spanish film festival in Kyiv and are to organise another one in Lviv in the autumn. We have some other projects in the area of photography, documenting the ravages to the environment caused by war in Ukraine from an artistic point of view. We are financing a project by UNESCO in Lviv to create a cultural hub to foster cultural life in Ukraine and keep track of the damage done to the cultural heritage. In the area of music, we have developed a very fruitful cooperation with the National Philharmonic of Kyiv. Since the aggression started, we have already co-organised three concerts, in which we have brought together Spanish and Ukrainian artists. We are going to continue this cooperation.

There is also an important group of Ukrainian experts in Spanish culture and literature, and we support their work. They are also a bridge between our two cultures. And we are working on bringing Spanish writers to Ukraine so they can see first-hand what is happening, report it back to the Spanish society, and therefore continue to sensitise our public opinion to the situation. It is not a complete list, and I hope to give you good surprises in the future in the cultural field.

– *Spain holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU in the latter half of 2023. The key priorities are the EU reindustrialisation, progress in the green transition, promotion of greater social and economic justice, and strengthening of European unity. Your Excellency, what actions are being taken to gain achievements in those areas? What role does Ukraine play on the agenda, considering the visit of Pedro Sánchez to Kyiv on the first day of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU?*

– In the speech in which the Spanish President of the Government presented the priorities of our Presidency of the Council of the EU, he mentioned those four priorities but also noted the fifth element: our support for Ukraine. He said that in this area, we would foster the unity of the European Union, which has been an enormous asset for Ukraine. He also emphasised that we would work for a just peace based on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine. Thus, the aggression against Ukraine is at the top of our agenda within the Presidency. We are also focused on the accession process, including the report by the Commission in November and the decision by the European Council in December. Our role is to manage the debates for this issue to advance as much as possible and to try to foster a consensus within the European Union. With regard to this, it is crucial that Ukraine fulfils the recommendation put forward by the Commission. This facilitates our work and hopefully, allows the

start of accession negotiations during our Presidency. So, at present it is of the essence to transmit to Ukrainians the importance of the full and comprehensive fulfilment of those recommendations.

The other priorities of our Presidency are linked with Ukraine in one way or another. For instance, when we speak about the reindustrialisation of the European Union, we are talking about keeping open markets to reliable partners – as I said before – which is the case of Ukraine. It is also about developing strategic industries, something closely connected to the reconstruction process.

On our second priority – the environment and climate change – the sanctions we have imposed on Russia have already had the decarbonisation of the European energy sector as a consequence. The way we have reacted to the war has had a direct impact on our agenda. It is not a short-term impact. We are cutting the dependency on Russia for the long run, strategically.

The third priority – the social pillar – is not only about providing services to vulnerable people but also about finding ways to finance this policy. In that respect, we are discussing the mid-term review of the Multiannual Fiscal Framework, and the discussion on the Ukraine Facility is part of this more general one. We need to see how to fit in the overall financial framework this important new financial commitment, estimated in 50 billion euros from now to 2027.

Finally, the fourth priority – reinforcing European unity – is related to Ukraine among other things, in the sense that not only Ukraine will have to fulfil recommendations and adapt its legislation to be able to engage in accession negotiations and ultimately be a member of the European Union, but also the European Union itself will have to adapt to the new reality of an enlarged Union. We need to undertake reforms within the European Union to that effect, and there is a debate already going on, for instance, about the qualified majority and how to extend it to new areas. This debate is also on our plate during our Presidency. As I said, Ukraine is a priority for itself and is also present in many other aspects of our work during the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

– During the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU, the summit between the EU and the countries of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) was held for the first time in eight years. Meanwhile, Russia puts much effort into establishing strong political and economic influence in the states of South America. Mr Ambassador, should we expect Spanish advocacy for Ukraine in the region, given the strong ties between Spain and Latin American and Caribbean states?

– Since we became a member of the European Union in 1986, we have been advocating for deeper relations between the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs uses the term ‘Euro-compatible’ to refer to this region since we share with them not only the Spanish and Portuguese languages but also history and values. The aggression

against Ukraine and its consequences have vindicated our approach to Latin America since it has made clear the importance of reliable international partners, and Latin America is a reliable partner for the European Union by definition. We need to deepen the relations we have with them in all fields: cultural, commercial, investments, scientific, etc. The mentioned EU-CELAC summit was about that, and there is an ongoing discussion on issues that are not yet resolved, in particular in the area of trade. In Spain, we hope everybody understands that this is a strategic choice that Europeans must make. We cannot miss it, and more and more countries are aware of this within the European Union.

Of course, Spain has special historical relations with these countries and maintains a dialogue with them on Ukraine. Sometimes, they come from very different perceptions because of their historical background and political experiences. Still, I think the exchanges we have with them are enriching, and we see positive results in some countries where you can feel that the sensitivity to the plight of the Ukrainian people is growing.

By the way, we are not only having this conversation with the Latin American countries. We have very good relations with African countries and countries in other parts of the world. We are also integrating this dialogue on Ukraine in our exchanges with them so they understand what our position is. This debate is important because it is part of the aggressor's agenda to present the war in a different light, not as an aggression against a theoretically weaker country but as an attack on its own security. This is clearly not true, but still, it needs to be explained in many places. We are doing it. I have to say, we are not doing it alone, as the Ukrainian Government is aware of this and is very active, with its authorities travelling to Latin America and Africa and working on opening new embassies and better staffing the already existing ones.

I think we should commend their effort because the war is also fought in the minds of the public worldwide, and in this kind of war, the diplomats are kind of soldiers who also need the necessary equipment. I also commend the work of Ukrainian civil society in this field. It is very impressive to see how Ukrainian society has mobilised and how Ukrainian voices speak everywhere for their country. I would add that the more, the better. I mean that Ukrainian voices need to be heard not only in the countries which are already convinced but, more importantly, in those which have not yet been convinced. The impressive work of Ukrainian civil society in reaching out to many countries across the world is a testimony of the Ukrainian determination to vindicate a sovereign, fully independent Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. You can count on our full support.